

Shooting at myself 摄影给自己 | 1997, Chengdu 1285, 120 x 80 cm | performance and installation photography / 戴光郁

戴光郁

DAI GUANGYU

印痕: 参与和抵抗的艺术

MAKING TRACES:

The Arts of Participation and Refusal

09.10 - 10.20, 2017

Curator 策展人

Maya Kóvskaya 迈涯



INK studio 墨斋

戴光郁
DAI GUANGYU

印痕：参与和拒绝的艺术
MAKING TRACES:
The Arts of Participation and Refusal

Edited by Maya Kóvskaya

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Contents

Preface	007
<i>Bérénice Angrémy</i>	
Making Traces Together: Participation, Refusal, and the Origins of Dai Guangyu's Public Performance Art Practice	011
<i>Maya Kóvskaya</i>	
Neatly Arranged Freedom, Present Absences, Dislocated Contexts and Signs of Our Times: Some Readings of Dai Guangyu's Art	042
<i>Maya Kóvskaya</i>	
Tibetan Crossing: My Days in Lhasa with Big Zhang	058
<i>Dai Guangyu</i>	
Dai Guangyu's Art Practice: A Three-Decade Trajectory of Participation, Refusal, and Perseverance	084
<i>Maya Kóvskaya</i>	
Biographical Timeline	265
Curriculum Vitae	308

Preface

Bérénice Angrémy

In friendship as in everything important in life, one never forgets the first time. This year marks sixteen years since my first encounter with Dai Guangyu. It was 2001, and he was still living in his hometown of Chengdu. A leader of many of the artistic movements on the cultural landscape of the New Wave and 1990s, Dai was seen as a conceptual art pioneer. Working in Taiwan at the time, I was newly passionate about "performance art," and when I went to see the performer Dai Guangyu I knew absolutely nothing about him. All I had seen were some photos of his performances in a Beijing magazine (I think it was in *Xinchao*). The meeting—an entire day in Chengdu conversing with Guangyu, who also generously shared with me photographs and videos of works by other artists—remains to this day one of the most exciting discoveries I have made of contemporary practice in China. Is it because I had studied ancient Chinese culture for so long that this multifarious forward-thinking artist left such a deep impression? An erudite man who upturned tradition? A man of letters who reinvented ink in its usage and form? I remember returning to Taiwan reenergized and determined to move to mainland China so that I could feel for myself the pulse of the vibrant artistic scene that I had glimpsed with Dai Guangyu. The meeting was the seed of a friendship nourished by respect and work which carried on after he moved to Beijing in 2004.

Dai Guangyu is a contemporary conceptual artist working in various media (he practices painting, installation, photography, performance and writing) who is in touch with China today—he questions the world and its contradictions, its suffering and its frustrations, with humor or severity. His perseverance with ink, his profound commitment to certain forms of art such as performance art, which he practices against the current of

ephemeral trends, his profound personal cultivation, his detachment from the mundane things of life, make him a literati artist in the manner of an earlier time—at least as I imagine it—transported to the 21st century.

Like many artists of his generation, Dai Guangyu is self-taught. Brought up in an environment peopled by scholars of Chinese history, he was trained in Chinese calligraphy from an early age. He knows where he comes from in the same way that he knows where he is going, something not necessarily shared by all his contemporaries. His favorite medium is ink, with which he paints and writes in the manner of the literati, but also with which he shapes forms and ideas and which his body transgresses, like the bold contemporary artist that he is. He exploits the physical characteristics of ink—the multiple shades of its blackness, its contrast with white or red, or its contrast with other materials such as flour, paper and flowers; and the echoes of yin and yang, fluidity, absorption, metamorphosis according to the materials it touches and the time it takes to work to give a powerful artistic form to the abstract and ambitious concepts that obsess him: the incessant violent suffering transformation of the world.

The work of Dai Guangyu, which has taken no commercial detour, is marked by the concept of "impermanence" dear to the Buddhists. He uses some of the elements of traditional Chinese culture, such as ink and *xuan* paper, also borrowing symbols from literary or artistic heritage to highlight inevitable and endless cultural transformations. His work does not stop at Chinese culture however, but also underlines the ceaseless transformations of people, ideas, nations. Whether paintings, installations or performances, his work always contains traces of the original object, neither totally erased, nor ever quite the same.

What makes Dai Guangyu's work unique is not the way he exploits the dichotomy of Chinese / globalised culture, but his treatment of

the incessant movement of things and people. Ink reveals itself in this context with a symbolic meaning in several senses, contradictory and complementary: a vestige of traditional culture, it characterizes the cultural burden of which the Chinese person is prisoner. Soluble and changing as it dissolves in water, it evokes a past whose original form will be forgotten in the future.

Dai Guanyu plays a great part in humanizing Chinese art through his work. He has not allowed his work to become a prisoner of commerce, and has not dropped the kind of provocative references that have vanished from the work of artists in the spotlight, but he also avoids gratuitous provocation. The œuvre of Dai Guanyu reflects China: in permanent and profound transformation, it remembers its roots and bears traces of indelible trauma, but is also endowed with an extraordinary vitality.

August 2017



August 1995

A demonstration in the name of art and for the sake of environmental protection. Dai Guangyu in the center, handing out promotional leaflets.

Making Traces Together: Participation, Refusal, and the Origins of Dai Guangyu's Public Performance Art Practice

Maya Kóvskaya, PhD

Intellectuals of the past stood at the forefront of thought. Their insistence on their learning and cultivation was in fact always a form of resistance against ignorance. The risk they bore was to be annihilated by the anger of the ignorant, which could be incited and exploited by the minority conspirators— annihilated in spirit and even in body. The intellectuals battling ignorance were heroes of benevolence and justice, their actions truly revolutionary. Who is standing against the tide of history? Who is impeding the progress of society? And who is destroying humanity's aspirations for the future? There can be no better real-life examples than what we see today. The great spiritual tradition of the literati elite is held hostage by treacherous bandits, who dominate the world and stifle moral character. To speak of moral character now is to undertake a tremendous risk. Its revolutionary potential and significance are thus self-evident.¹

~Dai Guangyu

1. Dai Guangyu, from his unpublished 2012 essay, "Case Studies in the Literati Lineage," (文脉断案举要), translated by Alan Yeung.

Pioneering artist Dai Guangyu first came to prominence as a leader of China's '85 New Wave movement in the Southwest of China. He has devoted his career to exploring the possibilities of performance art, often combined with ink, for making legible traces that index the attitudes and stances of an engaged and critical public intellectual, across a wide swath of cultural, aesthetic and political contexts. This essay explores several foundational moments in the emergence of that practice. In particular, it examines the historical roots of his vibrant public, political and participatory performance art practice, looking at his curatorial leadership and several landmark interventions in Chengdu.

The idea of "making traces" comes from the unique nature of a body of historically groundbreaking performance art artifacts created in the context of Dai Guangyu's performance practice that augment the usual photography and video documentation typically associated with performance art. Dai Guangyu's "performance artifacts" are significant artworks in themselves and indexically reveal the dynamics and critical stances of refusal and resistance embodied in his work. For Dai Guangyu, refusal to bow to the dominant "rules of the game," embodies a different kind of participation in the making of our shared world.

As the most important performance artist in China who uses ink as a key element in his practice, Dai Guangyu stands out both among his peers domestically and among other prominent performance artists internationally. For over thirty years Dai Guangyu has been using ink in his performance art in ways that both productively extend and also radically break with thousands of years of art history. Using the unique capacity of ink to make the ephemera of his performances permanent, he activates the trace-making power of ink on surfaces like *xuan* paper to "transmediate" the vital substance of his performance. The ethos of this trace-making process extends throughout his performance art practice, even to work in which no actual ink is used. The idea of the trace, as left by ink, can be found in much of his work, both literally, and metaphorically.

Most performance artists transmediate the fleeting moment of a performance into the *representational* forms that make the performance present again to new audiences by re-presenting it as videos or

photographs. Dai Guangyu not only does this, but also does something special with ink that distinguishes him profoundly from the others. Using ink on paper in many of his performances (or treating water, sweat, and other fluids as functional proxies for ink), he captures permanently legible traces of his performance ephemera. This is different in that he does so *non-representationally*. Ink acts as a "performative"² index that captures on paper traces of action and inner states of being, attitudes, stances, orientations and even sometimes interactions without resorting to representation—without depicting the performance. Laden with the indexical meaning of the performances that these traces instantiate, the performance artifacts produced also bear the weight of significance that painting alone cannot, because they index a whole panorama of performative action unfolding over time.

While this seems like a radical break from ink art tradition, it is in fact a logical extension into contemporary art-making contexts. Ink functions as more than just a "sign" of culture, history, or art, but as a medium that materially mediates the performance. Dai Guangyu's use of ink, therefore, is an organic extension (to contemporary performance art practice) of ink's traditional role as visual medium for recording a calligraphic performance, and the artifacts produced function as an index of the actions performed and his *xintai* or state of mind/being during the event. Just as the making of calligraphy creates a unique work of art—a unique visual trace of a calligraphic performance—so too does Dai Guangyu's performative use of

2. The concept of performativity has a rich complexity too dense to cover extensively in this essay, but draws on J.L. Austin's theoretical concept of the linguistic category of "the performative," in which saying of a verb in this category actually entailed the doing of the action therein described, such as saying, "I do," in the context of a wedding. Austin showed how language use involves what he called "speech acts" in which what the words (pragmatically) did (in their indexical context) was just as important as (and in fact determined) what they actually (semantically) meant. The concept of performativity was later extended into social and ritual practice by Judith Butler, and others, to look at social categories such as gender as performatively constituted), which explores the constitutive "illocutionary force" of "speech acts" (and performative modes of being, such as gender) that embodies and instantiates the doing of the action described by the word or enacted in the speech act. See Austin, J. L. 1962. *How to do things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*. Ed. J. O. Urmson. (Oxford: Clarendon). See especially p. 100-101 for his discussion of the difference between "illocutionary forces" and "perlocutionary effects." Butler, Judith. 1997. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. London & New York: Routledge. Performativity is useful for thinking about performance art, not because there is any necessarily theatrical, or make-believe element to performance art. On the contrary, Chinese word for "performance art," *xingwei yishu*, literally invokes the connection between the art and its instantiation in action, behavior, and conduct rather than highlighting theatrical or staged performances. In this way, the idea of Chinese performance art, ties in closely with Austin and Butler's notions of the performative dimension of speech and action, speech as action, and by extension, action as speech.

ink and paper as both signifier and medium create a unique record of a live performance event.

Dai Guangyu's work goes far beyond self-expression, however, routinely invoking a poetic, allegorical mode of performing scenarios that leave audiences questioning relations of truth, morality, ambiguity, responsibility, agency, authority and aesthetics, and performatively enacts these provocations through solo interventions as well as participatory group performances. Indeed, Dai Guangyu's long-term commitment to engaged public art and participatory performance art interventions that use a "social sculpture" mode of performance art, which engages audiences to "make traces" together through participation, is one of the most noteworthy aspects of his practice. In this respect, certain key ideas of political philosopher Hannah Arendt, about the constitution of generative forms of power and nature of the public sphere, resonate deeply with the ethos of Dai Guangyu's work.

Performance art is one of many ways in which questions about the human condition can be visually and conceptually posed. Put performance art into public space, and magnify its capacity to function as a form of what I call "performative politics." This is particularly so for performance art that critically engages and inspires both the refusal to do what Czech public intellectual and leader Vaclav Havel called 'living within lies,' and also encourage the participation of ordinary members of society. This is less about offering diverse representations of reality, per se, than it is about creating zones of critical discourse and introspection that can challenge the status quo and even change the topography of the public sphere. Participatory performance art in the public sphere amplifies this dynamic exponentially.

A generative form of power is produced when people come together and create their shared worlds through speech and action in concert. Acting and speaking together produces what political philosopher Hannah Arendt called the "*space of appearance*"—an alternative public space that takes shape within the collective gaze and shared narratives of a community; a space in which people can reveal and also construct themselves, as they try to co-create their own histories. The *space of appearance* "predates and

precedes all formal constitution of the public realm...[It] rises directly out of acting together, the 'sharing of words and deeds.' Thus action not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all, but it is the one activity which constitutes it."³

In this spirit, this essay explores the power of Dai Guangyu's participatory public performances to create Arendtian "spaces of appearance," in which they leave lasting and legible traces (in the form of indexical artifacts, as well as the invisible, but nonetheless potent marks on the consciousness of those who engage with his work). These "traces of appearance," as it were, are the embodiments of stances of refusal, resistance, reinterpretation, and offer the possibility of recuperating, reclaiming, and reanimating ways of being in the world that point us towards ways to consider how we, individually and collectively, might better "live in the truth."

Dai Guangyu and the Chengdu Public Performance Art Movement

1989 was a watershed year for Chinese contemporary art, indeed for much of Chinese society and culture at large, and it is impossible to understand the emotional weight and performative importance of Dai Guangyu's public participatory practice without implicit reference to the events in the spring of that year. Yet, it is also well-known that the events of that year are still politically taboo, and to discuss them too explicitly with reference to any given individuals, would be to put at risk those associated, even via intellectual conjecture. For that reason, and because these events are already so well-documented, the reader is asked to forgive the omission of explicit details and analysis, whilst bearing in mind the way in which public life, political criticism, and the culture-making milieu more generally, was profoundly altered in the aftermath. Perhaps it is useful, then, to think of these pivotal events in terms of their trace-making potency.

The "trace" that is most relevant to take on board is the fact that artists across several generations were deeply transformed by the experience, and/or knowledge of what had happened. Several trajectories of response

3. Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1958/1998: 198-199.



Chengdu artists march for environmental protection, 1995.

Top picture, in the front from left to right: Zeng Xun, Dai Guangyu, Liu Chengying. Below, the march as it passed by the Jingjiang hotel. This kind of demonstration, organized in the name of art, had never before been witnessed in Chengdu. Along the way, the artists distributed materials to raise environmental awareness.

emerged as a result. Some became more cynical and willing to compromise. Dai Guangyu was not one of their number.

For the first half decade following the events of 1989, the art world was mainly reeling in a state of depression and withdrawal into personal, private, experimental, creative spaces. Later a cadre of ruthless, cynical manipulators emerged, willing and able to deftly play the emerging market. They learned to flash the requisite, easily-digestible symbols of China and political disaffection (ironically deployed red stars, Red Guard uniforms, and other revolutionary political icons, made palatable and harmless as pop) that appealed to the growing corps of enamored foreign collectors of Chinese contemporary art, whilst conversely benefiting from playing within the tacitly prescribed official boundaries of the status quo sphere of acceptable cultural production and political expression, which Dai Guangyu has called "neatly arranged freedom."⁴

Performance artists were at the vanguard of artists refusing to go gently into that commodified night. More than most, Dai Guangyu has made that refusal into an art form. After 1989, when avant-garde art had been driven underground, Dai Guangyu began organizing numerous path-breaking public art events in Chengdu and elsewhere in southwestern China.

This kind of engaged, interventionist mode "participation," then, became a form of "refusal" to play passively by the received "rules of the game." Acknowledging this dynamic is critical to understanding how his principled stance of rejection of dominant norms of social, cultural, and political control, as well as the emerging rules and tools of the market, have figured into his mode of art-making. This principled refusal is also essential to his understanding of what it means to be an intellectual, an artist, and a person. Here he draws on a long lineage of Chinese hermits from antiquity—reclusive figures who made their retreat from the dominant society into an art of liberation, self-cultivation, and even an alternative mode of engagement. Indeed, both his own artwork and also the numerous participatory public performance art interventions that he curated and organized, form two interconnected types of the indexical traces that his

4. See my essay of the same title in this volume for a discussion of this idea of "neatly arranged freedom," and the Faustian bargain accepted by most of the Chinese art-world in the decades following 1989.

life's work as an artist will leave behind.

To understand the larger significance of Dai Guangyu's contribution to Chinese contemporary art, it is important to situate his practice against the background of what most art world commentators continue to view as the dominant character of performance art in the context of its emergence in China. The importance of the Beijing East Village in establishing a paradigm for performance art in the People's Republic is well-known, thanks to influential curators such as Harald Szeemann, who brought the work of Ma Liuming, Zhang Huan, and other prominent East Village artists to international stages.

Almost unknown abroad, however, were the parallel yet distinct developments that unfolded in China's southwestern provinces from the '85 New Wave onward. Of particular relevance, is the public performance art movement that emerged in Chengdu in the 1990s, where a community of artists charted an alternative course for performance art, propelled by the charismatic leadership and tireless organizational impetus of Dai Guangyu.

Reluctant to don the mantle of curator, Dai Guangyu nevertheless spearheaded, organized and effectively curated over two dozen exhibitions and participatory public interventions that thrust performance art into the public sphere in 1990s' southwestern China, and rallied a community of artists together into a meaningful group where alternative art-making practices thrived and developed according to a logic completely different from that which prevailed in Beijing.

In Beijing, the mainstay of performance art involved experiments in transgression, corporeal endurance and pain, as well as explorations of gender, sexuality, and power in relation to the biopolitical. These performances tended to take place outside the gaze of the dominant society, in liminal, "temporary autonomous zones"⁵ created by small groups of artists coming together to execute and witness live art in *situ*, often in the artists' own rented courtyards and places of residence. Nudity was a

5. Bey, Hakim. *TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*. Autonomedia New Autonomy Series, 2003.

fixture of a disproportionate number of the defining works of the time, as if one could hardly do authentic performance art without removing one's clothing. Attempts to shake up and even shock viewers were also vital to many of the key performances of that era, and expressing personal anguish and ambivalence about social norms and conditions of life in modernizing China were also frequent features of the Beijing East Village performance genre.

In contrast, the performance art that emerged from Dai Guangyu's curatorial and organizational leadership in Chengdu was an entirely different genre of performance. The interventions that predominated throughout the '90s in Chengdu were of a largely public-oriented nature. The movement focused on societal and environmental woes that affected the general public, such as ecological problems, including water pollution, and the vital importance of healthy rivers to human society; the need to protect historical and architectural sites, and safeguard the commonwealth; or combat the divisive greed of real estate developers, or the inappropriate use of public resources, etc. Although the Chengdu artists brought together by Dai Guangyu assumed deeply critical positions with respect to the status quo, they had little reason to take off their clothes; instead, their creative energies were directed outwards towards dialogue and engagement with society.

The driving questions being addressed through the Chengdu performances were not the vestigial modernist angst, tormented self-expression, or social critiques focused on the self via the body that accompanied many of the Beijing performances. As such, there was little need for either nudity in the performances, or the use of the body as the meter of endurance of pain and suffering, or a canvas on which to represent the various forms of alienation and malcontent with social norms and structural arrangements expressed so effectively in the Beijing works.

It is no surprise that the heavily nude and often shocking performances in Beijing were typically met with repressive opposition from the State. This oppositional response culminated in the arrest of many of the most active artists after their performances were witnessed by locals in the neighborhood and subsequently reported, and eventually resulted in



Dai Guangyu giving an interview during the Keepers of the Waters public performance art interventions, 1995.

their forced evictions and the dispersal of the Beijing East Village by the authorities in 1994.

Western art audiences found it all too tempting to fetishize this kind of subversive performance art, and the idea of political repression fed neatly into existing narratives of China and the West, freedom and democracy, oppression and resistance that were easily digested and commodified by the international art market. The titillating narratives of artists being arrested overshadowed the larger, albeit less glamorous, political significance of what was happening in the Chengdu public performance art movement. Moreover, Chengdu was off the beaten path for most western curators and critics and collectors, and so the western narrated history of performance art in China has been largely dominated by the synecdochic fallacy of Beijing, in which the part (true as it was) is mistaken for the whole.

Indeed, what happened in Chengdu, in contrast to Beijing, is quite extraordinary. Instead of repression and arrest, during its heyday, the Chengdu public performance art movement was met with widespread welcome by the public, and even celebrated in the media (which we must remember was and continues to be State controlled). With largely unappreciated, yet astonishing repercussions, Dai Guangyu successfully masterminded a strategy for inserting the idea of performance art as a positive social good into the public sphere, and the interventions he organized and curated were met with encouragement and affirmation.

In this vein, one of Dai Guangyu's greatest accomplishments lies in his ingenuous engagement with the mainstream media, through which the movement was able to disseminate artworks, drum up public interest, attract audiences to witness and even participate in their interventions, and share its messages across a broad swath of society, thus effecting social change through their engaged art practices.

As Dai Guangyu narrates it, over the course of this movement, the kind of art they were making, particularly performance art went from being something seen as "strange, unfamiliar, and unreadable," to something that was at first "familiar, then recognized, and finally," something that had a genuine "interactive relationship with society." He describes how they were

able to engage directly with the media," creating conditions for a wider dialogue about the issues brought to the fore in the performances with society at large, and "though the enactment of art in public, the movement in Chengdu achieved important inroads towards the legalization and legitimization of performance art and its insertion into public space [and in doing so] introduced a new model of power."⁶

The opening came, for Dai Guangyu, with an introduction to American artist Betsy Damon. She had come to China with a grant to collaborate with scientists from the US who were doing research on water pollution. Measuring the increases in pollution adversely affecting both the river's health and concomitant public health, from the wellspring in Tibet, the research followed declining water quality downstream. With Chengdu geographically located between the Himalayan headwaters and the major population centers downstream, the city offered a logical site for examining questions about water pollution and the need for healthy rivers in our societies.

The American Consulate in Chengdu knew Dai Guangyu through a cultural exchange to the United States in 1994 that they had introduced him to in honor of his artistic and activist contributions to society. Upon the Consulate's recommendation, Damon reached out to Dai Guangyu and their collaboration resulted in the first major participatory public art performance intervention in the region, setting in motion a new trajectory for this subgenre of performance art.

Dai Guangyu recognized this collaboration as more than a chance to put together a significant public art festival. He saw it as an opportunity to set the discursive parameters that would potentially frame future discussions of performance art. When he'd determined that the local government was indeed open to allowing a project conducted by a foreigner that raised ecological awareness and stressed the importance of healthy rivers and clean water, Dai Guangyu devised a plan that allowed them to hold a State-sanctioned public art project in Chengdu. The significance of this move to mobilize official legitimization in favor of performance art in the public

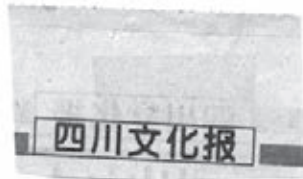
6. Dai Guangyu, interview with the author in Beijing (26 August, 2008). The following narrative and quotations from Dai Guangyu are taken from this lengthy interview.



During the execution of Long-Abandoned Water Standards, Chengdu 1995.



During the execution of Long-Abandoned Water Standards - Beijing, INK studio Beijing, 2017.



六 十年代以来,全球规模的环境保护运动展开,非但伴随工业、城市等现代化的发展,在“污染”这一魔咒阴影下,拯救濒危物种和珍稀植物、治理污染、保护濒危物种和珍稀植物、治理污染、保护濒危物种和珍稀植物...

新大旗“保护水环境”宣传的口号,开始——身命河麓立平蜀城中街头时,人们在许多意识到昔日蜀中诗人笔下“水绿天清不起尘,风和日暖胜三春”;“清江一曲抱村流,长夏江村事事幽”即令人留恋神韵的魅力早已荡然无存了!环境与物种多样性几百年悠久文明构筑的文化古城成都。

1995年7月29日下午,来自美国的八名艺术工作者克雷斯丁·柯恩、改仁拉姆、雅奥等在美国圣地亚哥推出保护水环境艺术装置,将流沙与水装置首次亮相成都街头,“清江河畔可漫步”这一优美动人的传说已成了蜀人不可企及的梦想。历时1小时的行为艺术意味深长地拉开了“成都水环境保护艺术宣传”的帷幕。

此次在美国“水的保卫者”协会、成都市环境保护宣传教育中心联合主办的“保护水质,提高环境意识”艺术科学活动”的发起

**中美艺术家手拉手
行为、装置艺术首次亮相成都街头**

邀请和组织者是来自美国的多媒体艺术家伊列莎白·达蒙女士。“我们唯一的目的旨在向公众传播有关人类赖以生存的珍贵之本“水”的知识,呼吁人们保护自己生存的自然资源,促进环保事业在世界的发展。”达蒙女士从美国阿肯色基金会争取到一笔资金,不遗余力地在中国寻求合作者,成都市政府对其项目提出的重视,使她选择了成都。在1995年8月10日间题为“中国四川设计”一流艺术工程。

于是来自成都、西藏、北京等地的十多位艺术家,作为首次在中国开展“水的保卫者”艺术活动的参加者,投入极大的热情开始了这次有意义的活动。他们从自身对水的艺术本体中走出,用艺术的形式介入“环境保护”这一主题,用作品去撞击人们心灵深处与拉的社会批判。

第一组色彩装置作品《装置已久的水循环》把从河滩河内挖入市区区取的水,置于12个圆形方盒内,标明取样的地点及分析数据;盒中放置矿泉水一瓶,一个典型的中国城市等日的木质结构通形形式的宣传板上,张贴着有关水质器具环境保护方面的图片、文字及数据过程,12个方盒象征着一年的12个月及天气,同样显示在锦江畔头的装置装置作品“量尺者”,是著名的《环境中的动物》系列之一。在一块写满数字的布上面,仁立着三位用布裹着的舞者,在一潭污水中钓起的不是鱼而是人类的废弃物,数字则被作者象征性地,堆成造成水污染的人类自己,唤起人们对自然生存环境的重视。

尹晓峰、蔡健、徐海彬的行为艺术作品《接触》,把家用塑料洗盆、洗脸盆、白毛巾、香皂各二十个排成一排,数量感所大,通过给人接触,同时使观众思考中国水质污染现状的物料,旨在通过帮助人们明白日常行为是怎样污染水质的,而另一组装置作品《水、生命》,则在一个鱼缸内放置一摞婴儿床,一桶清水,四周悬挂60个海扇状水生动物,来自北京的尹海彬,则把一捆捆海水的绳子置于两架阿拉伯风格,反映着蓝天、白云、树木,传达出作者对美好环境的向往。其余的作品也从不同角度阐述着艺术家对环境的关注。

以行为、装置艺术这种艺术形式展示于露天公共场所,这在成都尚属首次。艺术家在特定的环境中完成其作品的装置,在公共空间中与观众相遇、交流,使每个人对身处其境的环境,这一现实的生存环境产生关注与思考,从而引起心灵的触动、碰撞,有力的艺术语言,起到了震撼人心的艺术效果。

历时一月的“保护水质,提高环境意识”艺术科学活动”将于8月15日落下帷幕。届时此次活动功能要就其意义特别指出:“希望有更多的人们具有达蒙女士这样“水的保卫者”眼界呢!也非常感谢了人们新的审视与收获,人与环境的关系,公众的环境意识应深植于每个人的心中,我们只有一个地球,她是人类唯一栖息和生存的家!”(本报记者 叶峰)

August 1995

The media outlets and journalists reported enthusiastically about the positive role of performance art and installation art during the *Keepers of the Waters* public art events, as in this report by *Sichuan Cultural News*.

sphere cannot be underestimated.

In this respect, the Chengdu public performance art movement could not have been more different from the Beijing performance art genre with which the international art world is so much more familiar. In terms of Chinese art history, as well, this *fait accompli* achieved by Dai Guangyu is unprecedented, and laid the groundwork for half a decade of vigorous performance interventions in the public sphere of China's Southwest before changes at the national level destabilized the foundations he had built regionally for public art.

From the 29th of July through the first week of August, 1995, *Keepers of the Waters* made the riverfront and part of downtown Chengdu into a flourishing site where public art met the public sphere. The event brought together artists including Li Jixiang, Liu Chengying, Wang Tong, Yin Xiaofeng, Yin Xiuzhen, Zeng Xun, Zhu Gang, and others.

Among the many works performed, noteworthy pieces included work by Yin Xiaofeng, who parodied the aesthetic of corporate promotional campaigns giving away services. He invited people to enjoy a complementary face-wash or foot-wash in basins of filthy river water. Wang Tong filled ceramic water containers with filtered, potable water, and then suspended them over the polluted river from a bridge. Yin Xiuzhen froze polluted river water into huge blocks and then manually "washed" them until the water had melted away.

In addition to his curatorial work for this event, Dai Guangyu contributed his performance installation, *Long-Abandoned Water Standards*, which was remade in site-specific form for the *Making Traces* exhibition. In its initial iteration, Dai Guangyu solicited photographs from members of the community. Into medical trays, much like photographic developing trays, filled with the city's river water, he placed 12 black and white photos. Throughout the week of the performance, people came to the installation to watch how their faces were progressively consumed by the pollution in the water that corroded their portraits.⁷ The performance rendered the

7. Photographs of details from the performance of *Long-Abandoned Water Standards*, Chengdu, 1995, on page 24.

"invisible" toxicity of the pollution visible and relatable. This performance is one of his transposable, site-specific interventions, which was recently staged in Beijing to similar effect.⁸

While he "developed" the photographs in the trays of river water, Dai Guangyu would offer tea to passersby. He pretended that the tea was steeped in the same river water that he was using to soak the photos, but assured them that it was now purified, potable, and safe. He and other artists sipped cups of tea to reassure people, but predictably, no one from the audience was willing to partake of that tea. Their refusals instantiated and made visible a shared public knowledge of environmental conditions that had been latent before the performance.

During the course of the event, over ten thousand people passed by—a great many visiting the performance installation site, and eagerly dialoguing with artists. Unlike the small, cloistered audiences of the major performance works of the Beijing East Village, the people who engaged with *Keepers of the Waters* included homeless people and beggars, manual laborers and garbage pickers, merchants and business people, local elites and scholars. Local feedback was glowing. People praised the project and the media followed suit with enthusiastic reportage.

Although at the outset of *Keepers of the Waters*, the media were cautious—after all, few had heard of "*xingwei yishu*"⁹—the overwhelming positivity of the public response, which included even the city leadership, perhaps helped journalists conclude that it was safe to write positive coverage. After the first positive report, journalists sought access to provide more in-depth reportage. After major newspapers started covering the event, television followed. The experience convinced Dai Guangyu that "the alliance between media and art could play a critical role in the legalization of performance art."

8. Photograph of details from the performance of *Long-Abandoned Water Standards - Beijing*, Beijing, 2017, on page 25.

9. The Chinese word for "performance art," *xingwei yishu*, literally invokes the connection between the art and its instantiation in action, behavior, and conduct rather than highlighting theatrical or staged performances. In this way, the idea of Chinese performance art, ties in closely with the J.L. Austin's theoretical concept of the linguistic category of "the performative." See footnote number 2, above.

Being a State-sanctioned event organized with foreign involvement and dedicated to ecological and public health, organized around something as seemingly unobjectionable as a river, gave *Keepers of the Waters* a positive pretext for introducing performance art into the public discourse. Dai Guangyu's inclusive strategy and outreach to the media, enabled the Chengdu movement to accomplish an unprecedented *fait accompli* that pushed performance art into the public sphere in a positive light, which embodied decisive movement towards the legitimization of performance art as a respectable and acceptable public undertaking. This attitude towards performance art would have been inconceivable in the Beijing context.

Keepers of the Waters made the phrase "*xingwei yishu*" a household word in 1990s Chengdu. Thereafter, the term frequently appeared in the local media. Although the public interventions and exhibitions that Dai Guangyu curated, included installation, painting, photography and more, the media seemed hooked on the term 'performance art,' and often mistook all contemporary art forms for *xingwei yishu*, which, in a certain way, they are. In a sense, the performative force of the artworks in engaging members of the community in public space was so powerful that even painting and installation works without a typically performance-identified dimension, took on a performative valence.

Dai Guangyu recounted how, during that time, performance art became so popular and well-known in Chengdu that "even three-wheeled rickshaw drivers and newspaper sellers recognized us on the streets. We were like famous people and they would ask us when the next show would be so they could be a part of it."

The experience transformed the artists as much as it did the public discourse about the art. At first, Dai Guangyu simply intended to use eco-friendly concerns as a point of entry into the public sphere for their art. But the interventions he and his friends performed in public space had an infectious transformative quality. The dialogical process of engaging with members of the community about environmental problems began to transform the participating artists' own thinking, readjusting their priorities, and changing their sense of self in the process.



Dai Guangyu's work *Diary* during the exhibition *In Defense of Memory* at Sichuan Provincial Library, Chengdu, 1998.



Dai Guangyu's work *Diary* during the exhibition *In Defense of Memory* at Sichuan Provincial Library, Chengdu, 1998.

"The truth is," recounts Dai Guangyu, "in the beginning, none of us artists actually cared about the environment, but by the end of the project we had been transformed by it, and came to care about this problem deeply. Before our knowledge was limited, but later we learned about it and realized its importance." The statement further underscores idea that who we are and how we understand ourselves is relational and constituted performatively, through speech, action, practice, as well as dialogically, before the gaze of, and through the interaction with others.

Years later, Dai Guangyu had an experience that became a definitive anecdote illustrating both the depth and breadth of their positive reception. The story revolved around a performance by Yin Xiaofeng where he had dressed as a police officer and done a performance in the officer's attire at intersections across the city. When the police got word of this, they went to arrest him for impersonating an officer. The artists explained to the cops that they were "just doing performance art," and trying to call people's attention problems in the wider environment, to which the police are said to have responded: "Oh! You're the guys who did that performance about the water pollution back in '95! Never mind, we know you. It's fine, you can go."

Following on this success, members of the Chengdu Movement undertook many new public performance projects following the *Keepers of the Waters*, among which many are worth a detailed account. Two in particular speak volumes about the evolution of Dai Guangyu's practice as both artist and curatorial spearhead.

In 1998, the impending demolition of the provincial library that had been established in the late Qing Dynasty sparked the movement to undertake yet another intervention. The library's extensive archival holdings were in danger, as real estate developers planned to tear down the old building and replace it with a cheap new building they planned to slap up on the outskirts of town. While the new library was being built, the developer moved the library's holdings to a storage facility that was damp, moldy, and rat-infested. *In Defense of Memory* (sometimes translated as *Preserving Memory*) was Dai Guangyu's curatorial and artistic response.

The intervention he organized—*In Defense of Memory (Preserving Memory)*—took place on August 15th, 1998 and lasted a single day. The library had been cordoned off, so he was not able to could invite a large audience, but those he invited were strategic links to the public sphere: newspaper reporters, radio and television reporters, and scholars to witness and record.

The artists he brought together to share works, included Dai Guangyu, Hu Jian, Liu Chengying, Yin Xiaofeng, Zhu Gang, Zhang Hua, Zeng Xun, and Zhou Bin. To gain access to the building and put their plan into action, they had to bribe the security guards in advance and again on the day of the performances. They gave the guard two cartons of expensive cigarettes, and brought their observers inside to witness the staging of their artworks.

In Dai Guangyu's performance, *Diary*, his young son, wearing a young pioneer's uniform, dipped his ink brush in clear water and wrote a diary entry, silently communing across time and space with a photograph of his mother, also dressed in a Young Pioneer uniform when she was his age.¹⁰ Scrolls of photocopied images of Mao Zedong hung behind him. Zhu Gang read a book in which there were no words. Inside seven vats, Yin Xiaofeng burned magazines that he took from the garbage. He dumped the ashes out from the second floor and then shattered the vats below. Liu Chengying hung from a shelf, his body weighted down with books. He was dressed like a mummy, and covered in calligraphy. The media and scholarly witnesses recorded what they saw taking place.

The performances were just wrapping up when low-level management from the developer made an unexpected visit. The manager was incensed. Cursing the watchman, he called the company's other security guards, and locked the artists and their small audience inside the building, threatening them and demanding they hand over their film. While the artists nominated an art critic to negotiate for them, one of the journalists managed to escape. The art critic spun a story for the manager about how the artists were just having fun, that they liked to make art films, and they wouldn't make any trouble. Eventually, they were released.

10. Photographs from the performance, *Diary*, are located on page 30-31.



From March 1998 onwards, Dai Guangyu organized the Chengdu artists into an ongoing series of public performance interventions focused on saving the length of Ming-dynasty wall from demolition. They eventually forced the developers to make concessions, and thus preserved 60 meters of the (originally 300 meter) ancient city wall as a public scenic spot. Front row center, Dai Guangyu, with Zha Changping standing by his side.



Dai Guangyu's execution of his performance intervention, *Turning Stone to Gold*, at the foot of the Ming-dynasty wall he was trying to save. Chengdu, 1998.



The execution of the performance *Fossil* at the Ming-dynasty wall aroused much attention by the media, as well as the general public. Chengdu 1998.

By nightfall the media had done their work, and the performance intervention was made public. As the story rippled through the media, a public discussion about, and protestations against, the demolition of the library picked up momentum. As a result, deal that the real estate developer had cut with local officials was rescinded and the library was saved (perhaps, partly in order to cover up any untoward personal profiteering by officials who had presided over the sale). The performance intervention that Dai Guangyu had organized, in alliance with the local media, had successfully rallied the wider community and save their old public library. This success gave the artists participating in the Chengdu public performance art movement a sense of the ways in which the power to effect real change can be constituted by speech and action in concert, especially when that speech and action is transmitted into the broader public discourse and begins to change the way people think about the issues at hand.

Another telling intervention organized by Dai Guangyu also took place in 1998 and involved struggling in public against the power of real estate development interests. When a residential block was being razed to make way for a new construction, part of an old Ming Dynasty city wall was discovered still standing. The artists each executed performances at the Ming wall to create a sense of public outrage and responsibility for preventing the demolition. Performances included Dai Guangyu's, *Fossil*, in which the artist used polluted river water to paint classical Chinese landscapes on *xuan* paper on the wall. When the water dried—like so many other works of his that use water to meditate on visibility and invisibility, remembrance and forgetting—the image vanished, resembling the disappearance of history as architectural history is destroyed to make way for lucrative "modern" high-rises.

Zhou Bin washed the old city walls and in the course of these ablutions he discovered a Guanyin Buddha carving. Zhu Gang hunkered down inside a hole in the wall and read from a book with no words—suggesting what a history erased of content might be like. Later, Dai Guangyu spray-painted a number of old bricks lying around and filled the holes in the wall with these gold-painted bricks. After the performances Dai Guangyu, together with the scholar, Zha Changping, held a discussion panel with the media and residents to debate the fate of the wall. They set up a hotline and



Dai Guangyu giving an interview to the press during a participatory performance intervention in the public sphere, Chengdu, 1996.

were bombarded with calls from citizens, eager to help protect the Ming era wall. In this case, as in many of their other collective interventions, their performances provoked a media storm that helped save a sixty-meter segment of the wall.

From 1995 through 2001, Chengdu enjoyed an era of freedom for avant-garde art. This was challenged, however, when the Ministry of Culture issued its policy directive banning performance art. Although the wording of the statement singled out violence and nudity "in the name of art" as crossing the line, what followed was a backlash against performance art in general.¹¹

The Chengdu artists joined up again to protest the ban. Given that he still enjoyed enough local goodwill to have the event publicized in the media, Dai Guangyu curated an exhibition in a Chengdu bookstore, bringing together ten artists. Participants included Chen Qiulin, Deng Xun, Liu Chengying, Yin Xiaofeng, Yu Ji, Zhu Gang, and others. Symbolically enacting the way in which the Ministry of Culture ban served to hamstring artistic creation, Dai Guangyu's performance involved being hung upside down and forced to eat an entire meal and drink a beverage while suspended inverted. He recounts that it was extremely difficult and physically painful.

Until Dai Guangyu moved to Beijing in 2003, the loose confederation of artists in Chengdu continued supporting each other in their public performance interventions. Since then, some of their number, including Chen Qiulin, Yu Ji, and others, have also moved to the capital, where opportunities for exhibition and access to international opportunities outstrip those in Chengdu. Nevertheless, the vibrant experimentation and collective public engagement there continues and there is still a degree of community solidarity there that is hard to find in the cutthroat art world of Beijing.

Dai Guangyu's strategic engagement with the media was instrumental in his ability to engineering a *de facto* public legitimacy for performance

11. He Jingwen, ed., "The National Ministry of Culture Issues an Official Policy Statement Regarding Performance Art," *Nanfang Wangxun* (1 December 2002).

art in Chengdu that distinguished the movement there so profoundly from the more well-known performance art of the Beijing East Village. Likewise, media collaboration provided a vehicle for spreading the causes championed by the artists—environmental protection, cultural preservation, social activism, public accountability—helping turn local, eye-witness events into larger formations of widely shared public discourse about important aspects of the human condition and social responsibility for their community and shared fates.

Just as the emergence of print media in the West once enabled the emergence of a sense of common national membership in the "homogenous empty time" of a shared set of information consumption practices,¹² in their own modest way, the performance interventions in Chengdu curated and contributed to by Dai Guangyu mobilized a larger sense of community belonging. When such networks of affinity, affiliation, shared discourse, critical debate, and even coordinated co-actions and performative interventions transcend politically constructed boundaries and reaffirm the sense of common humanity (our shared natality), interdependence and mutual vulnerability (our shared mortality), as well as the glorious myriad ways of being a human being (our common and irreducible plurality) that Hannah Arendt linked to the constitution of "spaces of appearance," they play an important role in the generation of power through speech and action in concert, and the transformation of the public sphere.¹³

In China, where the powers-that-be continue to draw on the ability to dominate and manipulate discourse in public and the capacity to act as a gatekeeper of public culture by regulating public expression, performative interventions in public space can offer critical optics of both participation and refusal, through which to view the human condition, as well as offering alternative standards by which to judge the order of things. Dai Guangyu is an artist whose practice consistently does this work, leaving deep indexical traces of his stances and attitudes embodied in his artworks, as well as in the minds of those who engage with his work and participate in his performative interventions.

12. Anderson, Benedict. 1983/1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed., London: Verso.

13. Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1958/1998.

Neatly Arranged Freedom, Present Absences, Dislocated Contexts and Signs of Our Times: Some Readings of Dai Guangyu's Art

Maya Kóvskaya, PhD

Through his critical writings, curatorial projects, and, most of all, through his socially engaged art, Dai Guangyu has been an active contributor to the Chinese contemporary art world for more than two decades. It is impossible in the short space of this essay to do justice to the breadth and depth of this artist's rich career and body of work. Rather than attempting encyclopedic coverage of his artwork, I will offer an analytical approach to help reveal the powerful underlying connections between Dai Guangyu's aesthetic, conceptual, and social preoccupations. Indeed, it is his staunch and passionate social conscience, which is linked to his conceptual and philosophical concerns, that undergirds and lends substance to his visual, linguistic, and aesthetic explorations.

From the perspective of materials, ink—the sort used in *shuimo* traditional ink painting—has an elemental presence in much of Dai Guangyu's work. Other objects that frequently appear in his pieces include Chinese vases or vats (often containing black ink), hills of flour (always white), attire stained with black or white ink, white face make-up or masks, as well as ropes and other means of tying up and suspending the inverted human body in the air. In terms of expressive language and symbolic coding, we find his work is rife with apparent binaries and dichotomies that he ruptures, blurs, confuses, and calls into question; black/white, bad/good, up/down, concealed/revealed, visible/invisible are among the most prominent. His work engages these binaries and dichotomies in ways that push us to think past an either-or mode of reasoning, and he calls into question simplistic conceptualizations of the world as seen through the filter of these dyadic tropes.

If we take these elements as the base from which to evaluate Dai Guangyu's work, we would find his works interesting, even visually arresting. But it is



Dai Guangyu, *Floating Object*, 2006, Germany, performance.



Dai Guangyu, *Picturesque Landscape*, 2006, Germany, performance.

not until we take his works and position them in their appropriate worldly contexts and explore an understanding of the artist's engaged, socially conscious stance, that their genuine significance and power is fully evoked. Indeed, it is against larger social, cultural, political, historical and ecological backdrops that the core issues in Dai Guangyu's work truly come to the fore. Rather than perpetuating the either-or binary logic, the artist's work offers what polymath philosopher, logician, and semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce called a "dialogical" model of thinking, rooted in a semiotic "trichotomy."

Using Peirce's semiotic trichotomy, we can unify the seemingly disparate elements of the visual, the conceptual, and the social, getting us beyond simplistic analytical binaries. By engaging these elements in dynamic relation to one another, we can grasp the relationship as a genuine trichotomy that encompasses language, the world, and the thinking mind. This trichotomous relationship includes the process of reception, interpretation, and investment of meaning into the relationship between the signs the artist produces, their "objects" and their "interpretants," always with respect to some specific "ground" or mode of meaning. [This is confusing. A brief explanation of "trichotomy" would help.] In Peirce's own celebrated words:

A sign, or *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody [Is this quotation for accurate, it reads oddly] for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object*. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea. This idea is the "ground of the representamen." "Idea" is meant in the sense of a thought that has continuity, or like content, either in traveling between people or in the thinking of one person's mind, or in memory.¹

This semiotic system is inherently open and dialogical. In logical syllogism, only one valid "argument" (conclusion, reading) can be inferred from two

1. Charles Sanders Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), pg. 99.

(major/general and minor/specific) premises. The classic example is "All human beings are mortal. Socrates is a human being. Therefore Socrates is mortal." As a richer mode of reasoning, however, dialogism differs from logical syllogism in that each premise has at least two "alternate conclusions," each of which can function as the premise for another argument, which then also has at least two alternate conclusions, and so on, *ad infinitum*. In this way, every interpretant can function as a sign to subsequent interpretants, forming a honeycomb-like chain of signification. What this means is that the chains of signification, which are generated by the thinking mind as it places a sign in relation to some object with respect to some particular ground, are potentially infinite. Their meaning is by necessity grounded in the relation between those signs and their placement and use in our lives.

So what are the main signifiers or "representamen" in Dai Guangyu's art? What is the background against which Dai Guangyu situates these in his system of signs? Where does the role of "interpretance" and the thinking mind come into play in his conceptual sign systems?

To answer these questions, we must move from the abstract to the concrete, and from the general to the particular, for meaning is made relationally, indexically rooted in the context of its use and in the background against which it makes (particular, specific, yet often polyvalent) sense.

To understand the role played by ink in Dai Guangyu's work, for example, it is necessary to consider ink not merely as artistic medium but as social signifier with a set of complex relations to various social, historical, and cultural grounds, against which a variety of possible significations becomes evident. How can we conceive of ink apart from the context of its history? And yet by sundering ink from the traditional historical contexts of its use and attempting to open up space for constituting its meaning by rendering it as pure materiality, Dai Guangyu implicitly foregrounds the present absence of ink's historical function and meaning, and in doing so pushes us to consider who and what we have become in our relationship to the past.

What can his dialogical rethinking of ink tell us about ourselves and our lives today? The meanings of ink, in these works, are as varied as their



Dai Guangyu, *Landscape, Ink, Ice*, 2004, Germany, durational land art performance.



Dai Guangyu, *Absorbing-Being Absorbed*, 1999, Chengdu, performance.

uses. Without the ink used in calligraphy, landscape painting, and even the basic writing of words by the literate classes, Chinese traditional culture would be unrecognizable. The connection between the level of a person's cultivation and self-mastery and that person's literacy and refinement in the various uses of ink is an ancient one that until recently held sway in Chinese society for thousands of years. In the modern era, the power of the written word has certainly persisted in the form of canonical texts, maxims, slogans, blackboard newspapers, [what's a "blackboard newspaper" ?] and the mass print media. But the role that ink (both *shui mo and mo shui*) once played as a medium for the practice of self-cultivation and metaphorical litmus test of one's refinement has gradually receded from the hegemonic public consciousness. As new forms of self-cultivation (such as shopping) and new standards of value (such as property ownership and self-definition through brands and possessions) emerge triumphant along with market reform in the new order of things, a whole new mentality accompanies them.

Dai Guangyu frequently uses ink in performances, installations, and landscape art to make a variety of conceptual and aesthetic points that emerge most clearly against the grounds of the works' contexts. He uses ink that stains and spreads in unpredictable ways, ink that leaks out from private places, ink that has the capacity to reveal both prowess and impotence, ink that can be concealed only so long as the vessel that contains it does not break (and break it will on the count of 64—a number that, when read as two individual digits, represents a month and a day of watershed significance for contemporary China). Ink is ingested, spat out, splattered on the body, splashed across the room, and even leaked from his dangling pants leg like the urine of an incontinent man. What have we become? he seems to ask. In other performances, such as *Floating Object* and *Picturesque Landscape* (both from 2006), the ink-splattered man has become a part of the landscape itself, as Dai Guangyu floats like a dead man in a lake fringed by bamboo or hovers in icy water, half-blinded by the ink dripping into his eyes.

In Dai Guangyu's *Landscape, Ink, Ice* from 2004, the artist inscribes with black ink the calligraphic characters for "landscape"—literally "mountains and water"—onto the freezing surface of a lake. As the ink is absorbed

within the frigid carapace of this icy mirror, this symbol of the essence of Chinese civilization is locked beneath the surface: beautiful, frozen, ossified, and just beyond reach. Over time, natural processes slowly erode and reclaim this symbol of civilization until all that is left is a blurry smudge where characters were once visible. How much have we changed? this juxtaposition seems to ask. Is the essence of our self-cultivation and civilization now frozen and just out of reach, or has it already degraded into an illegible blob?

If the water in the work cited above is a metonym for "nature" taking its revenge on "civilization," the polyvalence of signs and the role of interpretance is illustrated once more in an earlier public art installation, *Long-Abandoned Water Standards* (1995). In this project, water also reclaims human artifacts, in this case photographs of local Chengdu residents, but the indexical ground against which water functions as a signifier or "representamen" is fundamentally different. Placing the photographs of local residents in pans filled with water from the nearby river, Dai Guangyu generated a dialogue about water pollution and the effects of environmental destruction. As days passed, people watched their own images grow murkier and eventually degrade until they became unrecognizable in the water. Far from signifying the power of nature, in this work it is the toxicity of humans in the form of the pollution they create that demonstrates our potential erasure through the destruction of our ecology and natural resources.

A look at another of Dai Guangyu's most important works offers an additional example of how interpretance and indexical grounding create meaning. In the performance piece *Missing* (sometimes translated as *Gone Astray*), filmed in the early summer of 1999, on a date of critical historical significance familiar to anyone aware of the transformation and tragic events that took place a decade earlier, the artist uses the visual devices of the mask, the uniform, and the gesture, rather than ink, to make his point. He and a participant dress in black, don identical masks, and make their way from the center of the city toward the periphery. They walk, take public transportation, buy newspapers, and sit around reading the day's news before going on to a movie theatre on the outskirts of town. Throughout the course of the day, they frequently repeat this familiar



Dai Guangyu, *Incontinence*, 2005, Beijing, performance.



Dai Guangyu, *Missing*, 1999, Chengdu, performance.

repertoire of gestures—a type of body language that is simultaneously familiar and bizarre because the gestures "makes sense" only against the background of certain institutions, scenarios, and routinized social practices, and that background is missing. [How is that background is missing here?]

What are these gestures, and why do they matter? The two identically dressed and masked men raise their hands, applaud, and cringe at random intervals. On the bus, on the street, and in the movie theater, with porn and B-movies blaring in the background, these gestures that do not correspond in expected ways to their usual contexts seem hollow, absurd, and meaningless. Yet it is precisely this removal of context (much like the sundering of ink from its traditional contexts in order to bring our attention back to contexts and concomitant meanings that have now grown sterile and disconnected from contemporary life) that allows the full meaning of the gesture, replete with its unthinking automaticity, to manifest itself. When we think about the absent "ground" against which these gestures make sense, for example, we find school rooms, board meetings, committees, small group sessions—social settings in which a predefined authority structure has already dictated how one is to answer the question: "all in favour, raise your hand." We assent, says the gesture; we know exactly what we are supposed do to in this sort of situation.

The absurdity that arises from these gestures of hand-raising, applauding, and cringing brings their deeper meanings starkly to the foreground. "We assent" is only the literal, semantic, meaning of the raised hand; "we approve," says the applause; "we won't fight back," says the cringing, hands raised as if to ward off blows. The *pragmatic* meaning, however, is what really counts. That is to say, what this gesture *does* and not merely what it *says* is how it functions as a shared social sign in its usual context, perpetuating conformity to the established structure of authority. And this is far more significant than mere assent to a motion or a measure in a meeting, more significant than approval of any given point made in a speech. The gesture is not so much a vote for whatever is specifically in question; rather, it is a clear indicator of the hand-raiser's submission to the hierarchy of authority that calls them into such a charade in the first place. The raised hand says, "I will not rock the boat; I know my place; I know the

rules, and I will play by them."

Likewise, the *pro forma* applause of the two masked men watching a motley assortment of movies has no relation to what is actually on screen, denotes no inner state of approval, and is not required to for its effectiveness since it performs its more important function as a social sign that pragmatically enacts conformity. And the cringing that comes as reflex before a blow—in this case, an imaginary blow from an invisible assailant—shows the way the internalization of mechanisms of discipline and punishment render the physical presence of the punisher unnecessary. As Michel Foucault puts it, the panopticon—a circular prison designed by philosopher Jeremy Bentham in such a way that the unseen guard at the center could see all the prisoners at once without ever being seen by the prisoners, giving the prisoners the impression of being constantly watched and obviating the need for the guard to watch them at all —renders the prison guard superfluous. Discipline acts from within. People have internalized the rules so increasingly there is little need for active external enforcement because the internally disciplined have learned to enforce the discipline themselves. More frightening than the direct confrontation of force is the gradual mass amnesia that facilitates the conscious charade of forgetting (another present absence that the artist's works bring to the fore). We do not notice what date it is, and we don't want to notice because we have already forgotten why one date, over any others, might function as a sign in and of itself or the ground against which other signs might take on meaning.

It is precisely the widespread conformity enacted through these simple gestures (and other similar socially conditioned repertoires of practice) and so elegantly captured in Dai Guangyu's work—and the conditions those gestures perpetuate—that give the status quo its persistent power. In a sense one can say that such gestures, symbolically speaking and taken together, collectively and cumulatively across the time-space continuum of a nation, are what hold together—indeed what embody, enact, and realize—the order of things.

Against the ground of the absent yet familiar social contexts of these gestures, we are able to see clearly the outline of Dai Guangyu's social and conceptual concerns visually reflected in his work. *Missing*, like so many of



Dai Guanyu, *Missing*, 1999, Chengdu, performance.

his other performances, bespeaks anxieties over the transformation of the order of things and its deeper implications for human autonomy, and by extension, the social function and independence (or lack thereof) of art.

As people internalize mechanisms of discipline, there is a concomitant and growing erosion of the logic of oppositional narratives that juxtapose ruler and ruled, because those binaries in fact do not always make much sense in the world in which we live. Likewise, there is growing loss of ability to think critically and independently within a conformist social framework. By internalizing the panopticon we no longer need to fear punishment, for we have disciplined ourselves, and by disciplining ourselves, we have rendered prisons and prison guards obsolete, ushering in a new regime of freedom—a freedom of absent presences and present absences [what kind of freedom? this is not clear].

Nowadays, in this new era in which the power of the seemingly autonomous machine of global capitalism has swollen to an unprecedented degree, people enjoy a bounty of what Dai Guangyu calls a "neatly arranged" freedom [what is a neatly arranged freedom? One that the State has decided upon and designed?] and are far more tolerant (at least superficially) toward art than at any time in recent history. He imagines a hypothetical day when the state will prepare metaphorical spittoons to catch any phlegm that artists might want to expectorate, that contains any messy emissions. He worries that this seemingly enlarged and yet neatly arranged "freedom," which depends on mass conformity and internalized discipline, may ironically make us more unfree, and art less independent. While "art" enjoys mass popularity in this new era, it has also been transformed into cultural capital that testifies to the "intelligence and refinement" of its self-proclaimed new admirers and an index of the "tolerance" and "openness" of the times. Expressions of rebelliousness in art have been appropriated, domesticated, and neutralized into the endearing tantrums of a naughty yet beloved child. "Art has become cute," he contends, assessing the sizable new wave of forms that are weak on substance and strong on the manipulation of images of naughtiness—just naughty enough to provide a "lite" provocation, without any actual risk of subversion," signaling the rise of a new ideological structure.

This new ideology is characterized by flexibility, a stance that is open toward the future and increasingly pragmatic. One thinks of Deng Xiaoping's famous invocation that black cats and white cats could both catch mice. An era of Manichean poles of good and evil gives way to a world in shades of gray. This has created an awkward and embarrassing situation for art, Dai Guangyu suggests, because while art can function as an "interpretant," offering us a conceptual space and critical distance for rethinking ourselves and the human predicament, many "independent" culture producers have largely lost their capacity for analysis and critical judgment under the hegemony of this new ideological structure, becoming complicit in the emasculation of art. The rise of a new critical standard, rooted in the value structures of the market, by which to measure and evaluate art, becomes a co-opted weapon used to disarm the weapon's original owner. What matters is not form, or technique, or even "artistic language." What is at stake is nothing less than discursive power itself.

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Tibetan Crossing: My Days in Lhasa with Big Zhang

Dai Guangyu

Translated and edited by Alan Yeung

[Translator's note: With the author's permission, this translation has been slightly abbreviated from the original for clarity.]

I

This has been a long and bitter winter. Amidst the barren trees, even the normally bickering jackdaws are nowhere to be found.

We are counting down to the end of the century. During these last days of year 1999—has it three days? seven?—I've been in a mental haze. My heart is cold, and my soul as if torn apart by a shrieking call for help. I wonder whether this is an inauspicious omen. It's not the wintriness that has numbed my mind; I've endured more punishing things. What is it that muddles my thinking?

The bells have tolled for the new year. Muttering good wishes to ourselves, we, irrational humans living in an inhumane world, solemnly and proudly step into the new century: year 2000. Excited and expectant, we are buoyed by beautiful visions of the future. The simple-minded people seem to have decided that an old millennium ended and a new one begun precisely at midnight on January 1, 2000. They're especially concerned that they belong to the latter. Others, more invested in mathematical rigor, insist that the new millennium will begin with year 2001 instead. Confusion and worry ensue. God has left us a problem.

God's matters are His alone. We can define the new millennium as we please. I say to those people drifting aimlessly in history: if, having entered the new era, you still fail to reflect and think, what is the purpose of living? A person for whom I have the utmost respect saw through your inhumanity and refused your company in a meaningless world. As you jostle to cross the threshold of the new

millennium, he permanently shuttered his door to life.

He refused to let this corrupt world sully his soul any longer.

One night in January, 2000, as people were arguing about the proper start of the new millennium, I received a long-distance call from a certain Zhang Xiaoquan, who turned out to be the younger brother of Zhang Shengquan. His voice quivering with sorrow, he informed me that Big Zhang had committed suicide in his Datong home on the first day of the new year.

This horrific news struck me like lightning across a clear sky. It's difficult to describe how I felt as I hung up the phone. In the frigid air, my breath seemed to congeal, and heaven and earth seemed to halt to a still.

No wonder the jackdaws are nowhere to be seen. No wonder my heart is so grey and so cold. A star has fallen, and the sun and moon have ceased to shine. The world has lost an upright, kind, and outstanding artist.

Is there a better lesson for the world than this? As good people continue to leave us, I think this world will become increasingly devoid of meaning—or at least the art world.

Oh Big Zhang, my faithful brother, why did you choose to leave us behind? Those who should be gone shamelessly linger on, while those who should stay haven't. Is there any justice? Your departure has left a void in the world.

At the start of 2000, I jotted the above words in my notebook as the opening of a eulogy to Big Zhang. Eight and a half years have since passed without a trace. I can hardly bear to reread them.

For the living, eight years is not a very long time, but neither is it insignificant. A lot can change in eight years. Of my former compatriots

in the art world, most have either betrayed their ideals or conceded defeat. Look at their ruddy faces and well-fed bodies, their trappings of material success, their complacent ways of life. If Big Zhang knew this, he wouldn't spare another thought for them. As for me, I can say without embarrassment that I remain the same person as when we met for the first time in Lhasa so many years ago, when we were startled to discover in each other a kindred spirit—unencumbered, unbent, and resolutely true to myself.

Big Zhang, you didn't consider me a brother in vain. . . Wherever you are, be free from regrets.

I came to meet Big Zhang rather late in life, but it was fate that I did so. Even before that we'd shared a mutual awareness and appreciation because we understood each other's character. As Mencius said, "In knowing a person, what is most precious is knowing his heart." Big Zhang and I had "known" each other in that sense for a long time. Little surprise, then, that Xiaoquan found my name mentioned again and again in his brother's belongings, and that I was the first person that he contacted after local friends. When Xiaoquan told me about Big Zhang's suicide, my eyes swelled with tears. Big Zhang had desperately needed my friendship and spiritual companionship. I'd promised to visit him in Datong but never made it. And before I could see him again, he'd decided to resume his "solitary journey"—except now in Heaven. How can we ever meet again? This will be the source of my enduring regret.

When Big Zhang was still alive, the art world, for all the difficulties and corruptions it faced, still enjoyed a certain purity and innocence. Since then, whenever I encounter those vulgar people who mistake art-making for a means of livelihood or even self-enrichment, my mind drifts towards Big Zhang, whose resolution and dignity as an artist stood in stark contrast to them. Like still water, like a flawless mirror, he at once unmasked the falsities of the world and illuminated my own being.

Alas, Big Zhang! Why didn't you continue to fight alongside me until we'd righted all the wrongs? Why didn't we finish writing the art history that China truly needs?



Big Zhang's performance *Crossing*, 1996, Lhasa. Photographer: Liu Chengying. Courtesy of Wen Pulin Archive of Chinese Avant-Garde Art.

Wen Pulin, who is editing a catalog of Big Zhang's works, called me yesterday to ask him to write an essay in remembrance of him. I not only eagerly agreed but believe I should dedicate myself wholeheartedly to the task. Already undeserving of Big Zhang's affection, I've also failed to participate in any event commemorating his life. A eulogy depends on emotional authenticity rather than form, but as the ancients said, "Feelings that cannot be articulated tumble in the bowels without end." To wallow in one's own sorrow without giving it expression isn't a good way to remember a departed friend.

There's something else important to note: in recent years, I've adopted an eliminatory approach to social life, ridding myself of vulgar acquaintances. At least their idle chatter no longer affects my mood. Is this newfound carefreeness my choice or a matter of destiny? In any case, it suits me and has enabled me to focus on what is salient. Evidently, Pulin is one of those true friends whom I cannot imagine losing, and his request I must obey. Good people are increasingly rare in this world. To do something with Pulin is not only pleasurable but also meaningful. It's right that Xiaoquan gave Big Zhang's belongings to Pulin for research. Big Zhang would be gratified to know that in this hideous world, a world that he despised, some people remember him dearly.

II

As I've said, Big Zhang and I met rather late—during the mid-1990's, barely 12 years ago. But even before then we'd been engaged in a spiritual communion, as if bound by a shared destiny. When we did eventually meet, we immediately became lifelong friends and conversed without reservation or inhibition. My friendship with Big Zhang lasted less than four years, but it felt like one of four decades. It had an archaic flavor, recalling Li Bai and Di Fu's meeting in Luoyang during the Tang Dynasty or a literati farewell party at a riverside pavilion. I often even find myself wondering if Big Zhang is still in his tiny, art-filled apartment in Datong waiting for me to knock on his door.

Human relationships are a curious affair. I've dealt with my share of so-called art-world bigwigs. Whether they are showy and low-key, there's no way for us to converse if we lack spiritual affinity. And then there're people who are cultivated but burdened with complicated and exacting minds, given to critical judgments and pretentious articulations. As someone who values understatement and insouciance, I find them tiresome and avoid them.

In August 1996, a group of bag-toting wanderers suddenly appeared in the streets of Lhasa. Artists hailing from various regions in the rest of the China, we were here to participate in the China-U.S. public art project *Keepers of the Waters*. Among us, Big Zhang from Datong was impossible to miss. With a straight nose, a square jaw, phoenix-like eyes, and long, flowing hair like Pangu, Big Zhang stood at a towering 1.9m and was dressed particularly inappropriately for the occasion—in an extra-large green military jacket and a pair of pants in the blue color of the Public Security uniform. Moreover, the tips of both his cloth shoes had been haphazardly cut with semicircular openings, revealing his sockless toes for the world to see. Clearly this wasn't someone too concerned with his presentation.

In such a spiritual place as Tibet, there was no shortage of mystical happenings. Little wonder that some curious locals whom we encountered along the way insisted that Big Zhang was a deity descended into the human world. During our visit to Drepung Monastery, a group of monks leaving their lesson ran directly into us. Once they caught sight of Big Zhang, they shuddered, eyed him briefly, and finally bowed and even prostrated themselves to him, apparently intoning that they had just seen a god.

Such is life with all its amusing whimsies and absurdities. It's not up to you, and you can't control it. Even if something happens because of you, you still have to take it in stride. If popular opinion demands a divine myth, then you must resign yourself to it. Even if it turns you into an idol, you must still obey the rules of idolatry and pretend that destiny indeed revolves around yourself. Otherwise you'll be bumped off at once.



*Big Zhang encountering monks at Drepung Monastery, Lhasa.

Is an idol created? Who or what creates it? The answer: ignorance.

Weren't the Chinese emperors of old impressive enough? Ha, not so. Don't you know that once an emperor was installed in his throne, it wasn't up to him to sit elsewhere? The Son of Heaven was subject to Heaven. And what is Heaven but that infinite expanse, empty and yet full of imaginative potential, at which a billion pairs of eyes affixed their gazes? Once an ordinary person was transformed into an emperor, he could follow the Way of Humanity under the guise of the Way of Heaven. The ignorant multitude needed the compassion and care of the one ruler possessing the Mandate of Heaven, the master of all, so that they could enjoy the illusion of safety under him. After all, most humans exist like swine and sheep, obediently awaiting slaughter.

The problem is this: Heaven could not have only one Son. When Heaven transferred its Mandate to another person, what was the emperor to do? Hence the dynastic transitions. Hence the periodic massacres. Such is the tragedy of history—perhaps of Chinese history especially!

"Water can float a boat but also sink a boat." If the Emperor could "realize the Way on behalf of Heaven," so too could the multitude. If Heaven appointed a new Son, the multitude would become his blind followers. But blind as they were, it'd be a mistake to belittle them. Once set in motion, they coalesced into an overwhelming and unstoppable force. Wasn't this what emperors spent their days worrying about? Fearful of poison in their food and assassins in their paths, they used their ancestors' laws to subjugate and oppress their subjects. When this became too much to bear, the latter would return the favor in a sudden and apocalyptic collapse of order. After a while, the chaos would subside, and the world would return to normal. The cycle would then continue. Who or what was in charge of it?

Heaven knows!

Whatever insight into this process you'd better keep to yourself. Whether you believe in it ultimately doesn't matter. All you can do is to follow it blindly. Such is society—a collection of rascals. If you aren't a believer,

you're derided for your ignorance. Try to reveal the truth? Society will destroy you. Such is history—a litany of ignorance. All idols, all heroes on the historical stage, are pawns in a game and idiots with no freewill of their own. Big Zhang, who knew this very well, had now ironically been deified in Tibet. It wasn't up to him to say no. All he could do was to laugh it off wryly.

That Big Zhang, as a visitor, was taken as a deity in Lhasa has something comedic about it, quite apart from the historical cycle I describe above. But no matter, as long as it's interesting and fun. Moreover, Big Zhang did in fact radiate that spiritual charisma that the Tibetans adored. Had he settled there, he probably would've lived better than a god, and might end up being venerated on a pedestal like the ancient emperors. Then he truly would have trouble coming back down.

Of course, I'm just joking. Big Zhang knew very well that he was only passing through. And so did we. Big Zhang was at heart an ordinary artist, unpretentious, kind, and humble. To this I can attest.

It was my first time in Lhasa. Having visited Tibetan areas many times before, and considering myself strong and healthy, I thought I knew what to expect. Once I got off the plane, I ventured forth with my loose and thin shirt flapping about in the wind. On the subsequent bus ride, Li Jixiang produced a mountaineering vest from his backpack and demonstratively put it on, saying, "Uncle Dai, try not to catch a cold! None of us are young anymore, you know." Gazing through the wide-open window, I said, "Ha, Master Li, don't be so feeble. Look at this beautiful scenery around us!" I ignored his advice and inhaled the Lhasa air with abandon. We reached our destination, the Banak Shöl Hotel, about forty minutes later. After setting down my luggage, I proceeded to the location by the Lhasa River where *Keepers of the Waters* was to take place. On the way I ran into Big Zhang. We shook hands and introduced ourselves, a bit like the heroes of *Water Margin*. I also saw the Shantong artist Zhang Lei, who was breathing through tubes in her nostrils and whose face was swollen to the shape of a winter melon. Hearing that she'd caught a cold upon arrival two days earlier, I had no inkling that I'd also fallen prey to the same acute illness. Before dinner that night, as I returned to the hotel with the rest of the

crew, it'd render me equally pitiable.

As I lay in bed moaning like a dying person, I knew I'd make a mistake that I couldn't afford. A visitor in Tibet who developed a high fever and pneumonia had no choice but to pack up and go home, or else risk going straight to hell. Now that I was almost sick to my bones, I could only wait to see if I'd endure the night. This was an elementary mistake for someone who'd traveled north and south as I had, and I'd make it yet again because of sheer recklessness.

While the others were at dinner, I was delirious with a fever, drifting into and out of sleep in complete darkness and silence. As I grasped for survival, my mind wandered freely in spite of my bodily suffering, conjuring up the adventures of Jack London and Ernest Hemingway to rally myself. Then in my daze I saw in front of me a man slouched on a bed against a wall—it was Big Zhang. With the other travelers snoring around me, I wondered why he wasn't sleeping. Instead he seemed to be shifting left and right in vain to find a comfortable position. Soon Big Zhang hoisted himself out of bed, slipped into his shoes, and exited the room with such extreme care and gentleness that the process must've taken over ten minutes. As he closed the normally squeaky wood door behind him, it didn't even make a sound. Could Big Zhang's conscientiousness about the other sleepers be anything but a sign of utmost goodness?

The next day I was feeling much better, my fever having subsided. The others went to Lhasa to sight-see, leaving me to convalesce in the quiet hotel room. Just as I was reflecting on the previous night, the door opened, and in came Big Zhang. We sat face-to-face and exchanged pleasantries. I offered him the floral tea that I'd brought from Chengdu, but he said he didn't drink tea.

"How about boiled water?"

"Not that either." Then, sensing my awkwardness, he corrected himself, "Alright. Boiled water."

Just as I wanted about to follow through on Sichuanese hospitality, Big

Zhang came over and said, "Let me do it. You rest."

This was how we began our conversation. It turned out that last night Big Zhang simply couldn't sleep. Years of illness had disrupted his nervous system and created in him immense psychological pressure. Without an outlet for his constant tension, he developed chronic insomnia and preferred to stand most of the time. Gradually, high blood pressure caused the veins in his feet to expand, and they would become inflamed and unbearably painful whenever Big Zhang lay down. As a result, for many years he didn't sleep reclined. As he spoke, I noticed the symptoms of elephantiasis in his feet and calves. Why should such a good person be afflicted with this illness? If there's a God, is He mistaken?

Although Big Zhang and I began talking about his illness and suffering, art and the art establishment were our main topic and remained so throughout our subsequent friendship. Whenever we talked our words flowed freely, but on other occasions and with other people Big Zhang was reserved to the point of silence. I understood that this to mean that I had his trust, which was a blessing because I benefited from our conversations. As the ancients said, "Only people who are at similar heights can share each other's company and discuss the Way."

As Big Zhang and I conversed by the window, a ray of sunlight traveled slowly from my cup to Big Zhang's like the shadow of a sundial—several hours had passed. Big Zhang never touched his water, which now became luminescent. Next to his guileless face, even his cup glowed like flawless jade. The ray led my eyes beyond the Tibetan-style windows towards the blue sky and white clouds, reminding me of where we were. By contrast to our chatter, the world outside seemed so tranquil—a world of unsullied purity.

"Do you like Tibet?" I asked Big Zhang.

"I don't just like it; I completely adore it. What about you?"

"I both adore and venerate it!" I replied. "The Han Chinese have lost the sense of reverence for nature, but here it remains strong. Reverence is

crucial. Without it, human evil and ignorance surface to wreak havoc."

"We the Han have given up our dignity. Without will, unthinking, and inactive, we are as pathetic and odious as maggots wriggling in a pile of shit—beyond help."

"That's right. What's the purpose of life if one is unreflective and incapable of action? After 1989, people have drifted towards the other extreme, becoming preoccupied with material fulfillment over spiritual well-being. That's exactly to fall into the rulers' trap. 'We'll let you live out your days like swine.' That's just how things are now—everyone reduced to swine!" I sighed.

"We do live in a shit pit now. Nobody wants to climb out of it, as if this uneventful shit pit suited our existence."

"What about you and I?" I asked, laughing.

"You and I live in the same shit pit," Big Zhang replied. "We've been thrown into it. It's unbearable. The only solution is to splash around until the stench fills the air and forces people to climb ashore."

Being so much in agreement, Big Zhang and I conversed without inhibition or reservation. His lack of posturing and of pretentious rhetoric resonated strongly with the ethos of Tibet. When we turned to the topic of religion, I noticed that Big Zhang wasn't very interested. He thought religion was hypocritical, and the faithful pitifully deluded. I pointed out that this attitude seemed to contradict the great compassion that permeated his thought. He said religion was consistent with human nature in the first place—they shared the ideals of goodness, benevolence, and compassion, which were qualities of the soul. But religion couldn't avoid being exploited by those with ulterior motives. So much evil was committed in the name of religion. Big Zhang had lost faith not in religion itself but in humanity as a whole. And wasn't the situation the same in contemporary art?

For Big Zhang and I to talk about contemporary Chinese art in Lhasa

was like two exiled criminals reminiscing about their former lives. We'd both been expelled from paradise. Our meeting in Lhasa had a historical inevitability: all that awaited us was exile, exile, and more exile! Exile was a test of the human spirit and the destiny of the awakened. Incompatible with the establishment and unwilling to pander our art to the vulgar, we refused the temptations of power in order to preserve our moral purity. We navigated the art world with a staunch attitude of independence and non-cooperation. For the sake of intellectual freedom, we existed in the urban and social worlds as recluses-at-heart. Such was all that we shared. Whether it was fate or our common outlook on art that drew us close, we saw our common mission as righting the wrongs of history.

Perhaps our art would be truly understood only a century from now. That'd be sad but not pitiable, as Big Zhang and I both believed. There was no need to give up hope; we had to persist, for power could never overcome conviction. We had to believe in ourselves. History would evaluate our age just as it would evaluate our character.

All this Big Zhang and I talked about that day. Then, at the start of the new millennium, he submitted his final rejoinder by ending his life. Was his suicide a test of the aesthetic judgment of our times? Was it to leave a puzzle for future cultural archaeologists? The question was whether to leave the puzzle for history or to attempt to solve it ourselves, in our present.

III

Keepers of the Waters had brought marginal art-world characters like Big Zhang and me to Lhasa, far removed from the cultural and economic capital of Beijing. But this place, unsullied by the "quest for modernity," wasn't marginal for us. In our minds, Lhasa was loftier than Mount Everest and defied all those rotten theories about center and periphery. Here we felt as if returned to our long-lost homeland, like two young children dreaming sweet dreams in their mother's embrace. Despite the introduction from the interior of such tasteless features as karaoke bars and massage parlors,

Lhasa remained charismatic and transcendent; spirituality preserved its dignity against the feeble and absurd temptations of the vulgar world.

On my third day in Lhasa, I'd recovered physically and was eager to visit the major Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with Big Zhang, Li Jixiang, Liu Chengying, and others. Big Zhang preferred to explore on foot, which was perfect for enormous grounds of Sera Monastery. On our way to Drepung Monastery afterwards, we took a break next to some boulders on a clearing and resumed our criticism of mainstream art and discursive hegemony. I said to Big Zhang, "You're so lonely in Datong. Why don't you come to Chengdu? Together we can give the bureaucratic art establishment and its cronies trouble. It'd be good for you at least to stay for a while."

"Of course I'd like that, but because of my foot problems I hardly ever travel. This trip is an exception. I have a fondness for Sichuan, especially for the profound cultural history of Chengdu. You Sichuanese have accomplished many meaningful things but haven't been able to gain mainstream recognition. This is actually a good thing. After all, what we do is anti-mainstream. How about this? In the future when you plan activities, include me as one of the Chengdu artists. I'm not in Chengdu in person, but my heart is with you: our artistic outlooks are consistent."

To Big Zhang's proposal, Jixiang, Chengying, and I all acceded enthusiastically. Although born in Hebei, Big Zhang had lived for extended periods in the southwest, having grown up in Chongqing and Guiyang and completed military training in Yunnan. Inclined towards literature, he even corresponded with underground Sichuanese poets like Wan Xia and Zhong Ming during his time in the PLA. Big Zhang told me that if he hadn't been so attached to the visual arts, he would've devoted himself to poetry long ago. Indeed, just two days later, I would witness his poetic side.

The Banak Shöl Hotel was one of the venues of the Sho Dun Festival, which began not long after our arrival. The festival has a purely religious origin. When vegetation and insects sprung to life in the summer, it was difficult for monks not to kill them inadvertently on their outings. To avoid this violation of a foundational Buddhist precept, the Gelug School required monks to remain in their monasteries between the fourth and six

months. When they emerged from the retreat, ordinary folk rewarded them with banquets of yoghurt and Tibetan operas.

The climax of this year's Sho Dun Festival was likewise Tibetan operas. Being very interested in the festivities despite not understanding any Tibetan, I documented them diligently with my camera. As I collapsed in exhaustion afterwards, Zhu Xiaofeng came to tell us that in the meanwhile Big Zhang had been spiritedly reading some poems he'd just written. The hustle and bustle of the festival didn't impede or interfere with his poetic inspiration at all! Arriving in his room, I found Big Zhang reading and striking occasional poses. What left the deepest impression was his energetic waving of his arm and his thunderous and yet rhythmic voice. I'd been to many poetry readings, but Big Zhang's was most affecting I'd ever witnessed.

Li Bai, the Immortal of Poetry, recited his poems under the influence of wine. His emotional authenticity moved readers of his time and of later generations alike. His words remain accessible to us, but the drama of his readings can only be imagined. Was it possible that Big Zhang was now channeling Li Bai's presence in front of our eyes? Big Zhang's poetic persona also had a certain resonance with the ancient philosophers. In the 1990's, I painted several self-portraits under the guise of Zhuangzi. Now Big Zhang struck me as even closer in spirit to him. I'd always striven for simplicity, understatement, and righteousness, but Big Zhang's way of life even more thoroughly embodied these qualities than my own. Being in Lhasa with him, I was always aware of his unencumbered carefreeness. When I asked him about it obliquely, he replied, "Even pockets are extraneous to me."

I thought I'd misheard, but he explained, "No. When I first came to Lhasa, I went to a military supply store and bought a new outfit. Then I simply discarded the old one, which I hadn't washed in a long time. Even then its pockets were empty—I had no use for them." Later, other people confirmed that Big Zhang indeed owned only one outfit at a time. He was the same with food: he kept only one bag of rice at home, ate nothing else, and didn't even drink water. I was envious of his ability to reduce his needs to a bare minimum and ashamed I couldn't do the same.



Participants of the second *Keepers of the Waters* at work. American artist Betsy Damon is at the center, Dai Guangyu at her left. Big Zhang is seated in the back.

IV

In life Big Zhang may have been simple, but in art he was nothing but exacting.

The participants in *Keepers of the Waters* had arrived in Lhasa a few days before its opening, traveling frequently between the venue and the hotel for discussion and planning. The previous iteration of *Keepers*, held in Chengdu in 1995, proceeded in like manner, and everyone was used to it—especially Big Zhang, who at every meeting sat alone in the back row, far from the group and listening silently. Betsy Damon, the director of *Keepers*, seemed to understand him and never asked him to speak. Likewise, for his performance Big Zhang chose a location far away from the main venue and from the rest of the artists. Damon didn't object to this either.

Many people attended the opening. I wasn't sure whether Big Zhang was there or for how long. Towards the end of the day, when most of us had finished our works, I thought of Big Zhang and went to see him at his location, over a kilometer away. There I saw him standing over a dozen brooms that he'd suspended in a straight row beneath a water lock, such that the water flowed through their bristles. Was this a way to purify Lhasa's water, which was becoming increasingly polluted? Perhaps Big Zhang only wanted to ask: Can anything be purified? And if not, what is point of the brooms? Even the locals appeared to find the performance resonant and suggestive; none of them questioned Big Zhang's sanity as he stood there solemnly and silently, as if in deep meditation. Isn't Chan Buddhism about the incomprehensible triggering spiritual awakening? Big Zhang never spoke of Chan explicitly, but he closely embodied it.

At night, Big Zhang summoned me to a quiet place and told me about another performance that had long gestated in his mind. Now he was sure it was what he most wanted to do and what he had to do. Entitled *Crossing (Du)*, the performance would have the explosive quality of a spiritual breakthrough, which was possible only in the profoundly religious environment of Tibet. He'd decided to realize it on a rocky bank of the Lhasa River, at a point where it widened greatly and diverged into several streams, less than one kilometer from the Liuwu Bridge. Big Zhang was to

ford the river carrying a sheep over his shoulders, after which it would be slaughtered with a knife and buried according to human customs. I suspect that earlier in the day Big Zhang didn't simply seclude himself; his surging passions were no doubt in response to the festivities. Location and context are crucial for performance art. Why not at Tiananmen Square but along a river in Lhasa? Big Zhang knew very well that Buddhism prohibits the taking of life, especially in Tibet. His decision that *Crossing* had to take place here and now must have been the result of careful deliberation.

I told Big Zhang that *Crossing* would be a masterpiece and that I supported it in spite of the controversy it might cause. The work raised questions not only about good and evil, but also about innocence and hypocrisy, charity and misunderstanding, the right to end life, violence, helplessness against violence, the abuses of interpretation, action and retribution. These complex issues, which have preoccupied humanity for millennia, are timelessly relevant. Big Zhang was pleased but still hesitated about the killing of the sheep. He toyed with the idea of hiring a butcher to do it in his stead. I said, You could, of course, but the work wouldn't be as compelling. If the sheep had to die for you, why would you pretend it was someone else's responsibility? Moreover, extraneous details would lend themselves to misinterpretation. If the artist himself sustained different roles and mental universes, the performance would be cleaner, with more dramatic tension. The result would be heart-wrenching and momentous. As for the title, we agreed that the single character *du* was better than the more colloquial binome *duguo*. The former had a richer and deeper resonance, whereas the latter was at once bald and pandering, and seemed hypocritically to claim a moral high-ground.

Everything was ready. On a beautiful afternoon several days later, Big Zhang led the artists he'd invited to the designated riverbank: Song Dong, Yin Xiuzhen, Li Jixiang, Liu Chengying, Zhang Xin, Ruan Haiying, Yu Leiying, Zhu Xiaofeng, and myself. A hand-operated tractor rumbled up the road. In the rising smoke, Big Zhang carried a young sheep off the tractor and led it towards the bank. He'd purchased it from a slaughterhouse for three hundred yuan.

With total concentration, Big Zhang began methodologically to prepare

for the performance. We were expectant, as if awaiting the eruption of an oilfield. Then he and the sheep appeared across the river. Through my camera viewfinder I saw the unfolding of a fairytale-like scene, at once familiar and unfamiliar: a sheep; a river that it needed to cross; a man assisting it like a Biblical Samaritan; and behind them, the azure sky, encompassing all like the backdrop of a theatrical stage. As Big Zhang lifted the sheep onto his shoulders and stepped into the water, it instinctively struggled with him for a few moments, but soon it became silent and obedient. Reaching the rocky bed in the middle of the river, Big Zhang faltered and appeared at risk of being overcome by the frigid and rapid currents. As I tracked the pair with my camera, I prayed for their safe passage. Soon they were drawing near our side. Then, with a final push, Big Zhang climbed ashore, exhausted.

Now the sheep appeared completely won over by his human helper, lying on the ground and cooing peacefully. Or perhaps it sensed impending doom and had resigned itself to it—one could only guess. As I pondered its state of being, a voice commanded, "You can't kill it!" Absent in Big Zhang's script, these words thrust me from theatrical absorption back into reality.

It turned out to be Song Dong trying to prevent the sheep's slaughter.

"No. You can't do this. Please step aside," replied Big Zhang, holding a rusted Tibetan knife in his lowered hand.

"If you must kill this sheep to complete this work, then I must stop you."

"I must kill this sheep to complete my work. Please don't stop me," said Big Zhang beseechingly.

"No matter what you do, you can't kill this sheep."

"Song Dong, can you please not stand in my way? I've already made the decision that I must kill this sheep. Otherwise the work loses its meaning."

"The sheep can't be killed unless you kill me first." By now Song Dong was

shielding the sheep closely with his own body.

Big Zhang grasped his knife, trembling but still persistent. The mood quickly became grave, with neither party was willing to concede and all observers shocked to silence.

What could be done now? Whatever we thought, it was difficult for us to express it. The performance's chain of signification having been disrupted, it gradually turned into a moral dilemma in the present tense. Big Zhang's helplessness aroused my sympathy for his earlier hesitation about the killing, and I was the first to break the silence: "Song Dong, no matter what, I don't believe you have the right to stop Big Zhang's work in the name of morality. Once the work is completed, people will interpret and judge its violence themselves."

"Now that I've seen what's about to happen, I must stop it. The sheep is innocent. Why must it be killed to complete an artwork? Can't it be set free after the crossing?"

"A cruel reality has chosen this sheep for sacrifice and Big Zhang to execute it. Animal sacrifice is an ancient custom. Big Zhang is using an animal meant for slaughter as material for his art; he's already turned it into an artistic language that refers only obliquely to reality. Why is that a problem? Moreover, we can't condemn killing when we've been eating meat every day." Despite the violence of the intended slaughter, as a metaphor for reality it was categorically different from an inhumane act. "From a moral standpoint, there is too much bloodshed in real life that should be stopped and yet is allowed to continue. The reason is precisely that it hasn't been subjected to the strident moral interrogation of *Crossing*. If we stop an artist here from killing a sheep, we're only inflating our self-righteousness without bearing any risk. Does that mean we've transcended ourselves and transcended reality? Does that mean we turn a blind eye towards all the other violence in reality?"

So, at 3pm on August 28, 1996, along the Lhasa River, against the backdrop of the Potala Palace, a vigorous debate unfolded about Big Zhang's *Crossing*—about the ethics of killing and violence, the nature of evil,

humanity and freedom, authority and dignity, even the June Fourth incident and massacres. We debated whether a person, a group, or a society had the right to censure, in the name of morality, an individual's expression, however extreme it might be. Conversely, did an artist have the right to perform an unconscionable act in the name of art, disregarding ethics and general opinion? Could art become an excuse for immoral behavior? As we argued about these sensitive issues, our tone and words became mercilessly aggressive. Only Yu Leiqing, who was busy recording us with an audio recorder, didn't speak.

Why did Big Zhang, otherwise too conscientious even to disturb other people's sleep, insist on his performance against accusations of cruelty? I couldn't help but be reminded of the Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini, who illuminated the world's hypocrisies and falsehoods with his art. For this he became a pariah and bore the full weight of society's hatred. In 1975, soon after completing *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom*, Pasolini was tortured and murdered outside Rome. Eliminated by the machinations of power, he yet became a shining example of social justice and moral conscience. With *Crossing*, Big Zhang likewise declared war on hypocrisy and falsehood. If the work was thwarted, it wouldn't be the fault of Song Dong or anyone of us present, but of the incurable ignorance of society at large. Therefore the completion of *Crossing*, and its subsequent interpretation and persistence as a text and a historical event, seemed to me of utmost urgency and importance.

Ultimately, Big Zhang's artwork eluded its creator and became a complicated drama of ten participants. Perhaps it was all the more thought-provoking for being permanently unfinished. Nonetheless, let me write a few words about the ending. Again and again Song Dong proposed that the sheep be freed, citing the Tibetan belief that a sheep released from human captivity would never be slaughtered; we'd only need to mark it with a red ribbon tied around its horn. I was very skeptical about the contemporary currency of this custom: "Song Dong, if you truly want to take responsibility for this sheep's life, releasing it is not a bad option. But you'd better take it back to your home in Beijing and set aside a space for it to live out its natural life." I knew this suggestion was unrealistic, if not also histrionic and absurd, but feeling protective of Big Zhang, I wanted to



Summer of 1996, on a bank of the Lhasa River. From left: Li Jixiang, Zhang Xin, Liu Chengying, Dai Guangyu, the sheep, Big Zhang, Song Dong, Zhu Xiaofeng, Yu Leiqing, and Yin Xiuzhen.

challenge Song Dong a little.

And I wasn't entirely wrong. Even when doing good, we humans can't help being theatrical about it. Our two- or three-hour standstill seemed to have tired even the sheep, which was now prostrate and munching on grass. Caressing its head, Zhu Xiaofeng exclaimed, "Poor thing!"

This little vignette tugged at the heartstrings of everyone present, including those of us who wanted the performance to continue and even Big Zhang himself. We started to say, "Let it live then!"

Song Dong seized the moment to offer, "Big Zhang, you're a kind person. I see that you can't bring yourself to do it anymore..."

At this point Big Zhang hurled his knife into the river. "The work is a failure!" he howled, and then said no more.

Afterwards, regardless of which side we'd been on, we arranged ourselves in a row to take a group photograph with the sheep. Then Zhu Xiaofeng removed the lasso from its neck. As if realizing that this was a moment of life and death, the sheep suddenly leaped up and sprinted away. At the same time, a group of Tibetan children who had been watching us distantly emerged to pursue it. We observed this unexpected turn of events in silence, but we were probably all thinking to ourselves, Run! Run! Soon the children, ignoring the aforementioned custom, caught up to the sheep in the middle of the river and captured it with all their might.

Its fate was clear to us all. Without a word, we boarded the tractor, which had been waiting for us by the road, and rode it back to the city. Our mood seemed even more solemn now than during the debate. As the vehicle sputtered forth, we heard nothing but the loud and rhythmic rumble of its engine. The animal had cleansed our minds of all thought.

That night, lying in bed in the hotel, I wondered whether God had sent it to us as a test of our humanity.

V

For followers of Christ, the significance of martyrdom became clear only upon his crucifixion. In society, only when ignorance becomes a target of criticism does "enlightenment" become a meaningful notion. In 2001, after the Propaganda Department circulated a notice "on the prohibition of graphic and violent performance art," the government began to persecute performance artists. Hijacked by political power, "morality" became a weapon to be deployed out of self-interest and subject to no legal constraint. It's good that Big Zhang wasn't with us to witness the shameful events of 2001, absurd and laughable as they were, and ultimately inconsequential in the long arc of history.

I mention this in relation to *Crossing* in order to draw a contrast: what happened in Lhasa was a spontaneous and authentic questioning of morality, and thus diametrically opposed to the hypocritical moralizing of propaganda. Although I disagreed with Song Dong's attempt to stop Big Zhang's performance, he was motivated by genuine convictions about life and human responsibility. He simply wanted to prevent slaughter and bloodshed. To be sure, this was easier said than done. First, one risked committing another kind of violence—the emotional cost of hegemonic ideas and speech. Second, it was too easy to confuse bloodshed in life and in art and to exploit this confusion. Third, how should one extract or isolate oneself from bloodshed? Was it enough just to avoid butchers as Confucius did? Fourth, the real world being permeated with all kinds of cruelty, was it correct to disregard them in favor of a particular cruelty in a particular artwork? Was doing so not shameful or pitiable?

I had my own opinions about the morality of violence and bloodshed, but my foremost concern was with human dignity and the right to self-expression. This included defending another person's right to criticize me. Only when these basic rights were secure could authentic voices be distinctly heard. The controversy surrounding *Crossing* was a refusal of the uncritical, unthinking chorus enforced by hegemonic authority. Therefore we didn't mince our words or allow any opinion to pass unexamined. Our debate in fact enriched and deepened the meaning of *Crossing*—in a sense it completed *Crossing* as an event, a process, and a text. Conversely, the debate



Dai Guangyu's work *Listening*, Lhasa River, 1996.

tested our courage to face the truth and engendered in us a new sense of responsibility. It was for us an unforgettable lesson, if not even a new lease on life. Perhaps Big Zhang was correct, after all, that it took the slaughter of an animal to jolt us out of our collective complacency and stupor!

On the other hand, the disruption of *Crossing* was a decisive and monumental blow to Big Zhang's spirit. The unremitting harshness of our debate and its unfortunate conclusion, too, were a burden on our consciences, such that we buried them deep within our individual memories. None of us ever spoke of the experience when we met again, not even Big Zhang and I. The only exception was Liu Chengying, who wrote a narrative about it after returning to Chengdu. In Lhasa, Liu had staunchly defended Big Zhang's right to realize *Crossing* just as I did, but his attitude had evidently changed in his later recollection, resulting in a vague description that easily causes the reader to misconstrue what actually happened. Here we may observe the immense psychological pressure exerted by social mores.

Big Zhang, the protagonist and creator of *Crossing*, is no longer with us. More than a decade has passed since that fateful afternoon in Lhasa, but it is seared in my memory and feels as if it were just yesterday. In spite of the emotional ambivalence and fraughtness of the experience, I have hastily committed it to words for posterity. *Crossing* is an unknown monument in the history of contemporary Chinese art. Over the years, many events have passed without making an impression on me, but the summer of 1996 has never been far from my mind, nor Big Zhang's goodness. If he can hear me in Heaven, I have this to say to him: I once told you *Crossing* would become a timeless masterpiece, but now I am convinced that it was always already one.

Written in Liupukang, Beijing, between summer and autumn, 2008

**Dai Guangyu's Art Practice:
A Three-Decade Trajectory of
Participation, Refusal, and Perseverance**

**戴光郁的艺术实践：
参与、拒绝和毅力突显的三十年路**

Maya Kóvskaya, PhD

O1

Sixty-four Whiplashes

六十四鞭

1989 | Ink, xuan paper 水墨、宣纸 | 180 x 190 cm * Chengdu 成都

The trajectory-altering, transformative performance painting work, *64 Whiplashes* (1989) is a landmark piece in Dai Guangyu's oeuvre. It signaled a major shift and opening in his art practice, bridging his work as a painter into the realm of performance art for the first time. Until the making of this seminal work, Dai Guangyu thought of himself as a public intellectual, painter, and calligrapher. He was aware of Jackson Pollock and Franz Klein's action painting, but what spurred him to make this work that would change the way he saw himself as an artist, and the process of art-making itself. In pain over the trauma of a recent historical event that could not be publically spoken of or named, and trying to find a way to deal with the attendant feelings of rage and helplessness, Dai Guangyu sought to work through his emotions in his painting, but nothing seemed to make him feel better. He got the idea to dip a length of canvas belt into ink and get out his pent-up frustrations by whipping the *xuan* paper with all his fury and his might. He whipped the paper exactly 64 times, tearing the paper in places with the explosive force of the action. And then he realized that the work he'd made was not primarily a painting at all, even an experimental one—it was a *performance* of his raw inner state, an instantiation of that state, captured by ink in the way that ink is uniquely capable of leaving an indexical trace of one's interior state, stances, orientations, and attitudes, which is well-known of calligraphic works. This realization was of major, path-changing importance to Dai Guangyu, and set in motion the trajectory of his practice as a *performance* artist who uses ink to indexically capture aspects of the performative work in a direct manner that wholly bypasses the representational, gestural modes of expression in art-making, and yet is also not properly a form of abstraction. This performative painting opened him up a wide array of performance art techniques, and cemented the central role of ink in his performative practice.

戴光郁用蘸满墨汁的鞭子狠狠地抽击铺陈于地的宣纸，情绪在一瞬间地爆发中藉由鞭痕和爆开的墨迹留在了纸上。身处特殊年代，在那样巨裂的社会震荡下，基于条件反射促成地本能回应，是作犹若鬼斧神工，有如神助。戴光郁将所有愤怒、诘问与无奈情绪汇聚于突发性地行为冲动中，在灵煤助燃地情感宣泄瞬间，创造力忽然上升到另一高度，成就了语言转向的契机。毫无疑问，这是戴光郁转折性作品，它独辟蹊径的直觉把握，为其艺术走向定下基调。



01

Sixty-four Whiplashes

六十四鞭

Installation photography 装置图片



02

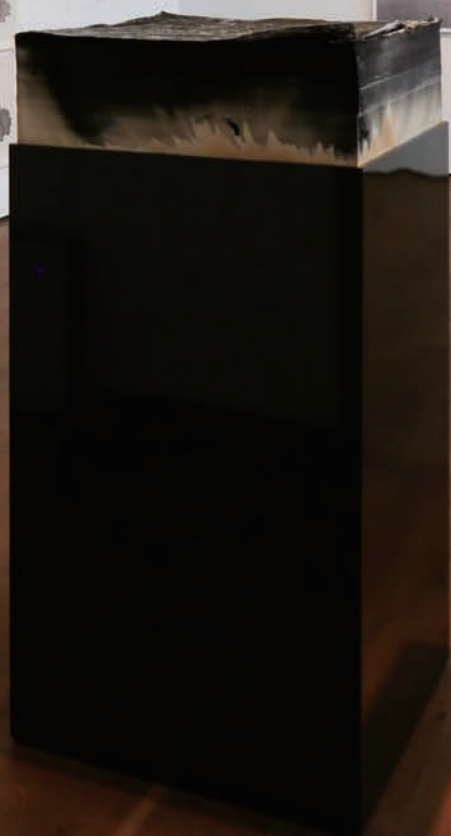
Marks of Corrosion

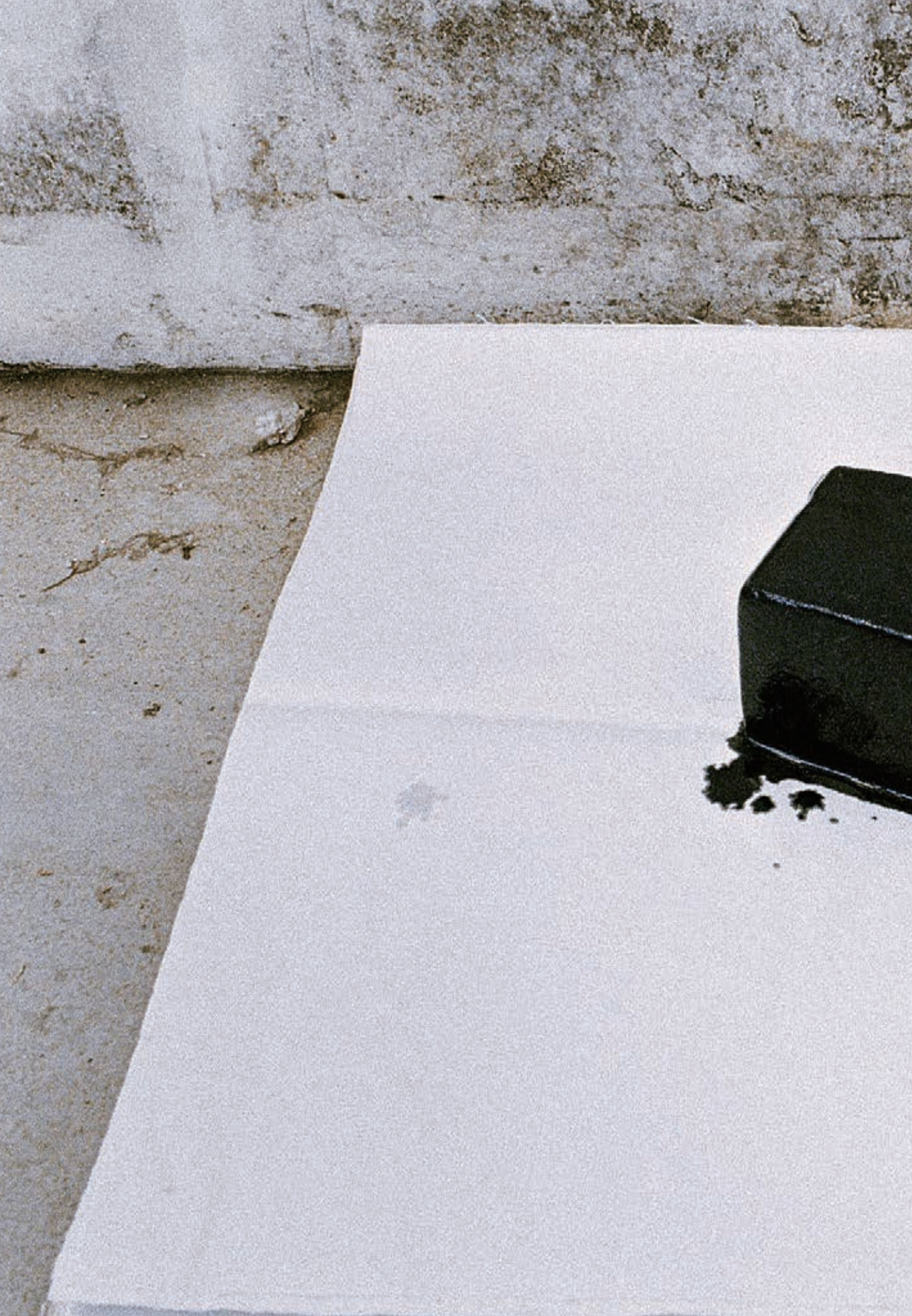
蚀痕

1989 | Frozen ink, xuan paper 冰墨，宣纸 | 80 x 53.33 cm x 2 * Chengdu 成都

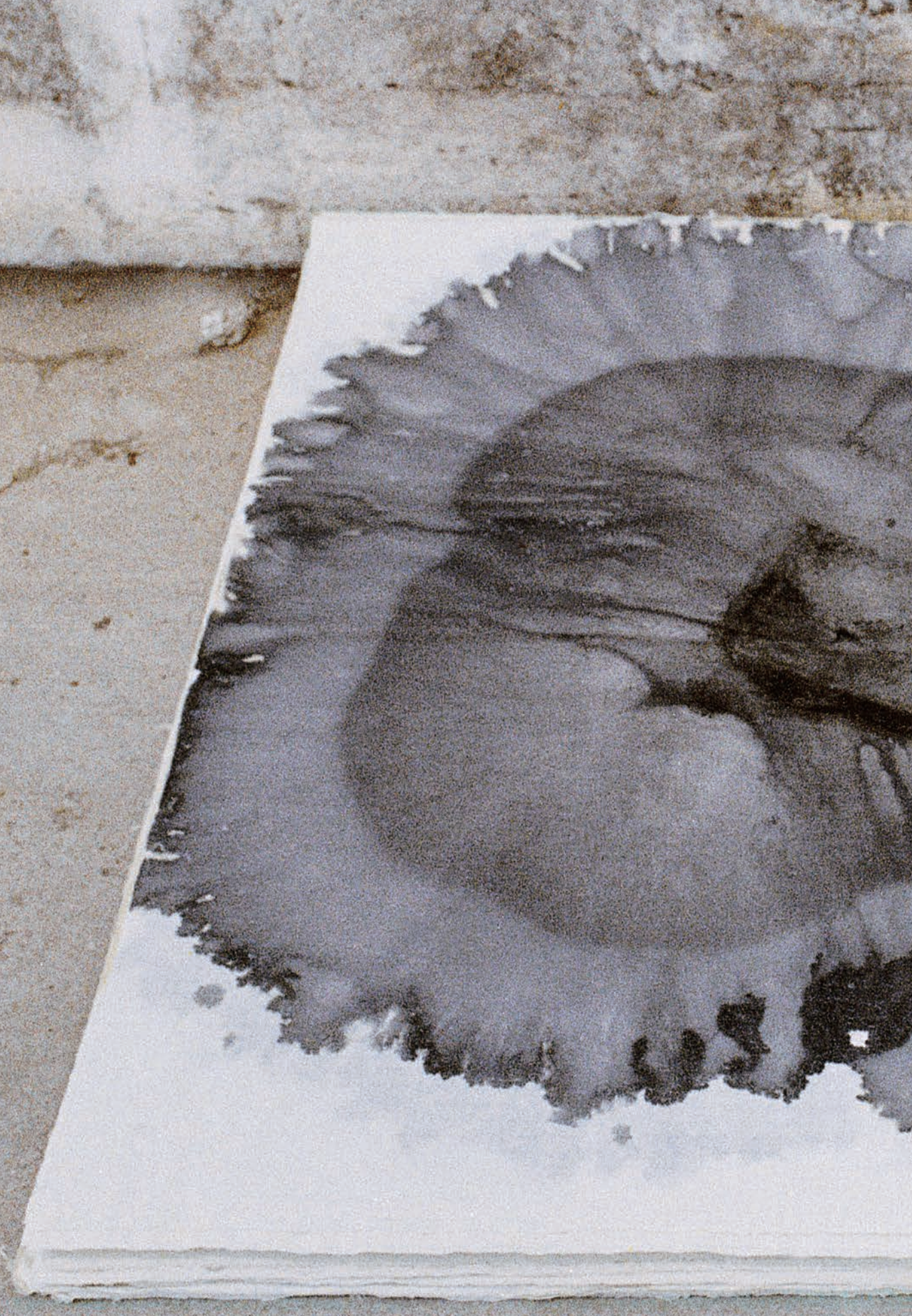
In *Marks of Corrosion* (1989), Dai Guangyu's seminal first performance installation that utilized what would later become an iconic medium for Dai Guangyu—blocks of frozen ink—the artist uses a stack of sixty-four sheets of *xuan* paper to record the gradual attrition of traces made by the dynamic process of melting frozen ink. It was during the second half of 1989, a watershed year in contemporary Chinese history, and like many other artists, Guangyu was seeking a new artistic language for speaking the unspeakable. Unsatisfied with self-expressive gestural work, but also finding both straightforward conceptual art and abstraction limiting, Guangyu began experimenting with ways to allow ink to leave dynamic traces that could index stances, attitudes, responses to events, and other embodied states of mind and states of being. He thought about recent vigorous attempts to erase the traces of certain critical historical events, to wash away the stains left on streets that indexed the presence of people and their crushed hopes and silenced struggles. If an event took place, he reasoned, then it must leave many kinds of indelible traces, marks that persist even as they shrink to near disappearance.

用 64 张宣纸垫在墨汁冰砖下，自然溶化的墨水渗入每一层宣纸并呈现出不同形态。经过层层过滤，印痕依次减弱，却仍是斑斑墨痕清晰可见。是作灵感，来自于墙角一隅蚀痕启示。戴光郁选择那里实施《蚀痕》，并以图像记录方式呈现《蚀痕》演变过程，只为证明一个基本事实，事物一旦发生，就像“蚀痕”再难抹去，尤其当它被指认，被记录，被定格于历史情景中，任何抹除行为都是徒劳。













O2 Marks of Corrosion
蚀痕
Performance Artifact 装置遗留物







03

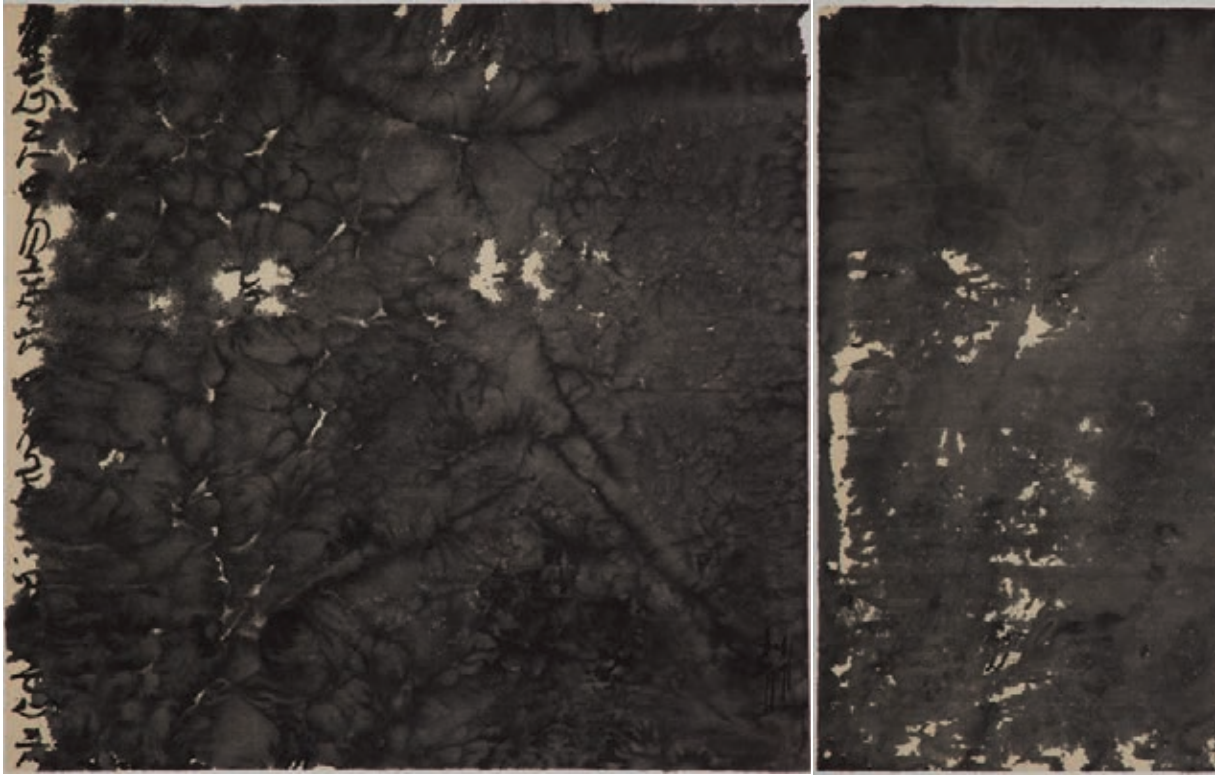
Stains

污痕

1989 | Frozen Ink, xuan paper 水墨 宣纸 | 72 x 74 cm x 3 * Chengdu 成都

Executed around the same time as *Marks of Corrosion, Stains* (1989) speaks to the same set of questions about the durability of the historical record, collective memory, erasure, erosion, visibility and invisibility, legibility and illegibility. An extension of his calligraphic practice into the realm of performance, Dai Guangyu wrote in ink the same unprintably political sentence over and over again on a three-layered stack of *xuan* paper. He then used clear water to repeatedly wash over the traces of his unutterable sentence until the characters had nearly vanished. After the ink was dry, although the ink traces were blurred, one could almost make out the outlines of the words he'd written like a catechism, and then obliterated. "Do not forget...Do not forget...Do not forget..."

在三张一叠宣纸上重复书写一句敏感词的同时，用清水反复冲洗文字，直至文字消失。墨水干后，三层宣纸揭开的复数印痕渐次减弱，却水迹墨痕自然掺化浸溢，留在纸面的痕迹虽然模糊，却墨迹斑斑，似又字迹可辨，更显文字原想表达的思想义涵。

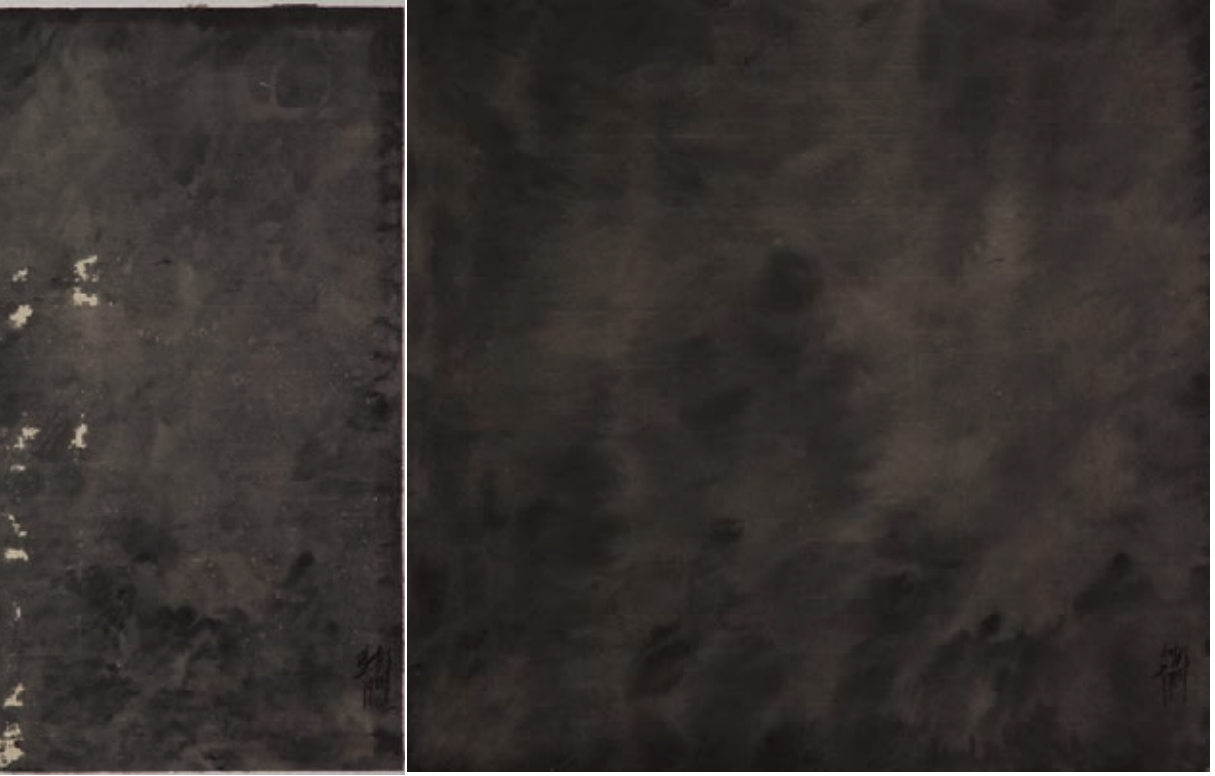


03

Stains

污痕

Performance Artifact 装置遗留物







04

Residual Marks

余痕

1989 | Xuan paper, ink, soy sauce, Chinese medicine 宣纸、水墨、酱油、中药
183 x 96 cm x 2 * Chengdu 成都

As with other performative paintings in the series of his works related to *Stains* (1989) and *Marks of Corrosion* (1989) left by ignoble acts and traumatic events in history, Dai Guangyu's two-panel piece *Residual Marks* (1989) is a personal exercise in grief and an attempt to both commemorate that which he knew would be expunged vigorously from public history and veiled in shared social memory as something that could not be articulated aloud. Using tea, soy sauce, Chinese medicine, along with ink, he layered *xuan* paper and allowed these various traditional fluids to leave behind marks on the paper. What has happened leaves traces on all of us, even if we can never speak of them. These marks allude to those hidden traces that life's traumas leave behind on each of us.

《余痕》一画作于社会动荡创钜痛深的岁月。在耳目昭彰铁证如山的历史情境之下，作者以图绘记录方式记下时代关键词——有别于史诗叙事方式。画面上，虽然污痕累累，却文字依稀可辨（时代关键词），一如“大事记”般不允规避地文字记录。正如以往鉴来的《史记》，只要有人行历史之恶，罄竹难书，终究难逃史笔追诛。作为历史证词，《余痕》一言词所指，意义正在于此——真相无法掩盖，《余痕》可以作证。



05

64 Days of Tea

64 天的茶

1989 | Tea, xuan paper 茶水, 宣纸 | 97 x 100 cm x 3 * Chengdu 成都

Conterminously executed with *Stains* and *Marks of Corrosion*, and engaged with the same set of preoccupations and exploration of trace-leaving and mark-making, *64 Days of Tea* (1989) become the repository of Dai Guangyu's daily ritual of brewing a pot of dark, smoky Pu'er tea before he began work for the day. This work began with an act of purging and elimination, as the artist threw his tea out onto a three-layered stack of *xuan* paper, and noted down the day. He repeated this ritual over the course of 64 days, after which thvame to an end. What had come from this ritual purge? How much of the evidence was left behind? He took the three layers of *xuan* paper apart and examined the traces left from the tea stains. Although the attrition pattern of the marks originally left was present—with the mirrored patterns left by the tea growing progressively fainter as they had penetrated the second and third piece of paper—each of the overlapped pieces nevertheless bore the durable marks of each day's tea.

戴光郁每日在三张一叠的宣纸上泼茶水，并记上天数，64 天后结束。三层宣纸揭开之后从第一张至第三张的复数印痕渐次减弱，但重叠的茶水印痕像烙印一般被记录。每天的行为结果既是追问，又是证词——虽然不著一字，却义正辞严，铿锵有力。



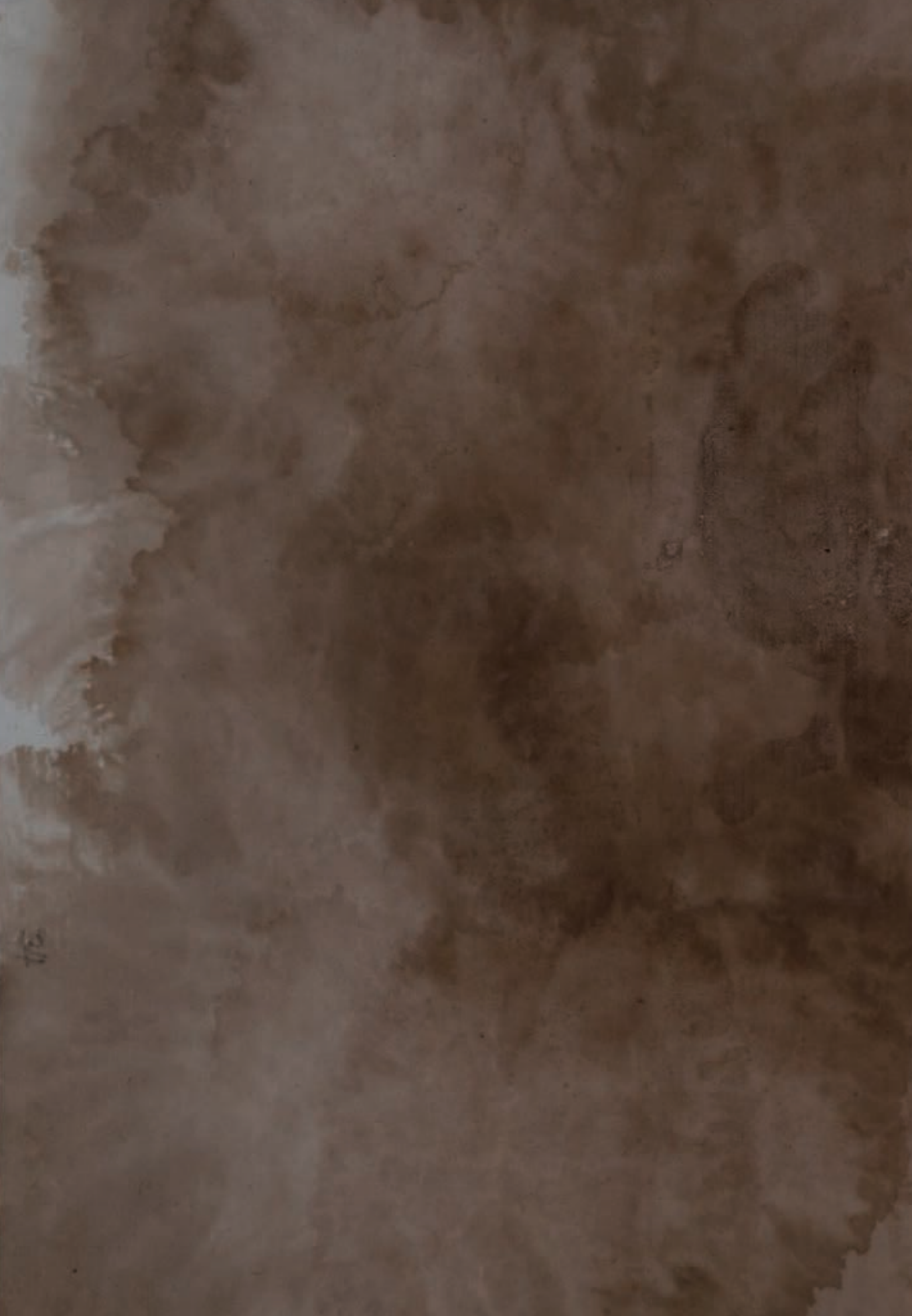
05

Stains

污痕

Performance Artifact 行为遗留物





12

06

Long-Abandoned Water Standards

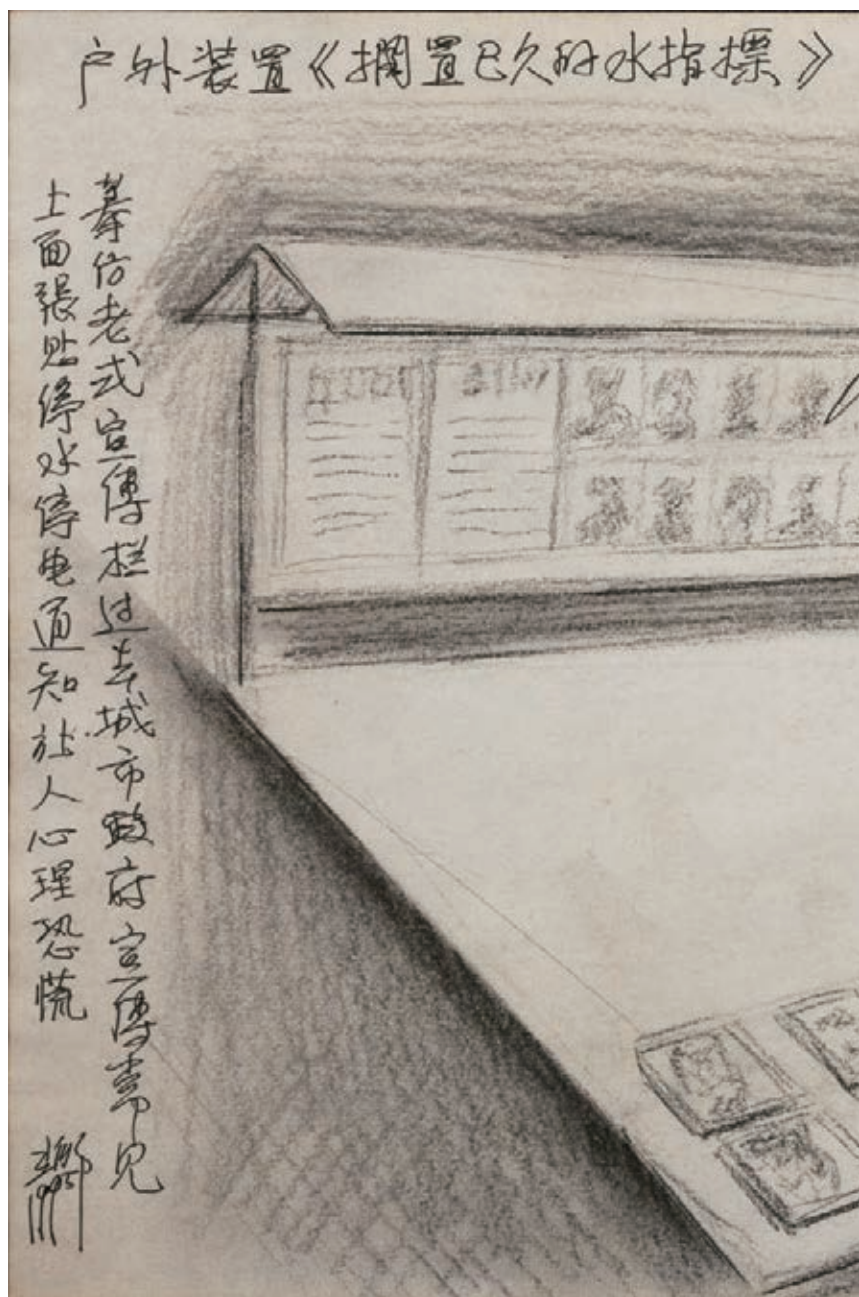
搁置已久的水指标

1995 | Photographs, medical tray, river water 照片、医用托盘、河水 | 260 x 330 cm ,
262 x 322 cm * Chengdu 成都

Long-Abandoned Water Standards (1995) stands out as one of Dai Guangyu's most important early participatory public art performance interventions. The work was executed during the *Keepers of the Waters* (1995) exhibition in Chengdu that he helped American Artist Betsy Damon curate, organize and publicize in China. Damon had come to China with funding and over a decade of experience in ecologically engaged public art, and Dai Guangyu introduced her to his cohort of avant-garde artists in Chengdu, Beijing, and elsewhere, and commissioned them to create public art works along the banks of Jinjiang River. He devised a brilliant public relations strategy to allowed *xingwei yishu* (performance art) to become a legitimate public practice (unlike in Beijing, where it was repressed ferociously) and celebrated household word in Chengdu.

For his contribution, Dai Guangyu wanted to get people to reveal their own tacit knowledge about the severity of water pollution and its dangers. To this end, he designed a performance to show rather than tell about the corrosive effects of water pollution, so that people would be empowered by actively drawing their own conclusions. He installed a newsstand in the style of a ubiquitous government propaganda case. There he hung posters he'd made, and images and writings about water. On the ground he spread white *xuan* paper, onto which he placed 12 medical trays (that closely resembled photo developing pans). Having solicited photographic portraits from a handful of people, he filled the pans with river water and immersed the images. After 24 hours of being corroded in the polluted river water, the photographs began to gradually peel and fade. With the help of the process that left the photographs corroded by polluted water, Dai Guangyu was able to use the mutilated portraits to show people, through direct observation, the extent of the pollution of the river water, and provoke them to contemplate the consequences thereof. After a week of being displayed, the clean white *xuan* paper on the ground was covered with footprints. Like the images that had gradually disappeared from the corrosion of filthy water inside the trays, the corresponding marks left on the *xuan* paper, quite literally showed our human footprint, reminding people that we are the causal agents behind these changes, which are still very much under way.

在公共空间（锦江河边）设置一个“宣传栏”（模拟政府宣传栏），张贴有关“水”的宣传图片和文字。宣传栏前面的地上裱上宣纸，既象征洁白无瑕，也使装置的两个部分连为一体。宣纸上（宣传栏正前方另一端）并置的12个医用托盘内分别放置12张肖像摄影，再用当地采集的河水浸泡之。24小时后，照片图像在污染超标河水腐蚀下，渐渐剥落褪色。戴光郁借助被污染河水腐蚀照片的过程，以留下来的残缺影像提问，是一种直观有效的感受方式，它使观众顿时明白河水污染程度，并思考其后果。是作展出一周后，地上洁白宣纸踏满人的足迹，不再洁净的宣纸正好与托盘中被河水腐蚀而消逝的图像对印，预示了这一切都是人为因素所致，并且仍在进行。



06

Long-Abandoned Water Standards

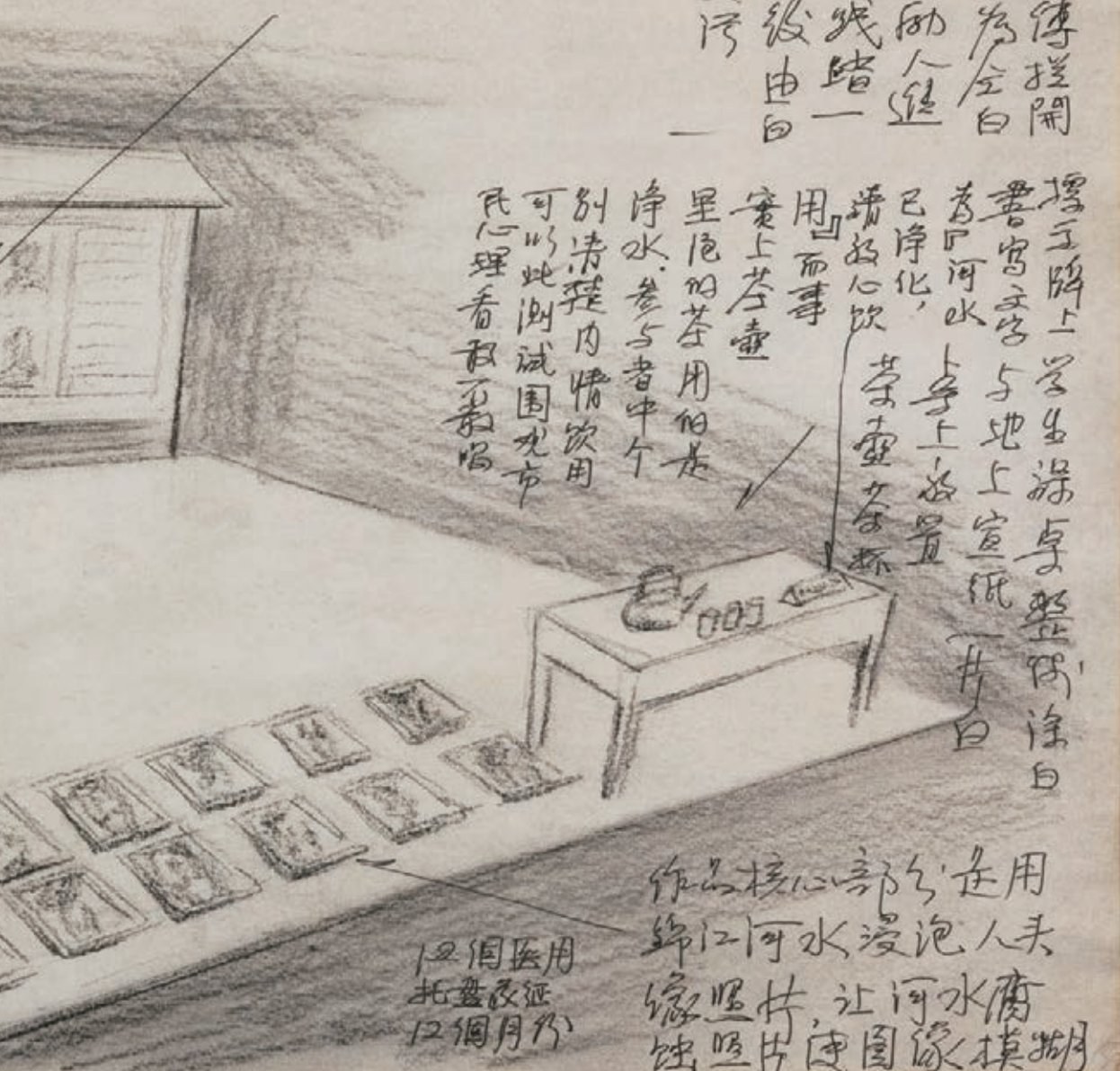
搁置已久的水指标

Performance installation sketch 行为装置方案

参与者大头像要醒目

宣传挂图
始为空白
鼓励人进
入线路一
周後由白
变污

墙上牌上学生课桌整齐涂白
要写文字与地上宣纸一样白
为河水 手上必置
已净化 茶壶各杯
用而事
案上茶壶
里泡的茶用的是
净水 参与者中个
别清楚内情饮用
可以此测试围兜市
民心理看敢不敢喝



作品核心部分在用
锦江河水浸泡人头
像照片，让河水腐
蚀照片使图像模糊

12個医用
托盤及证
12個月外



06

Long-Abandoned Water Standards

搁置已久的水指标

Performance process photograph 行为过程图片















07

Borderline

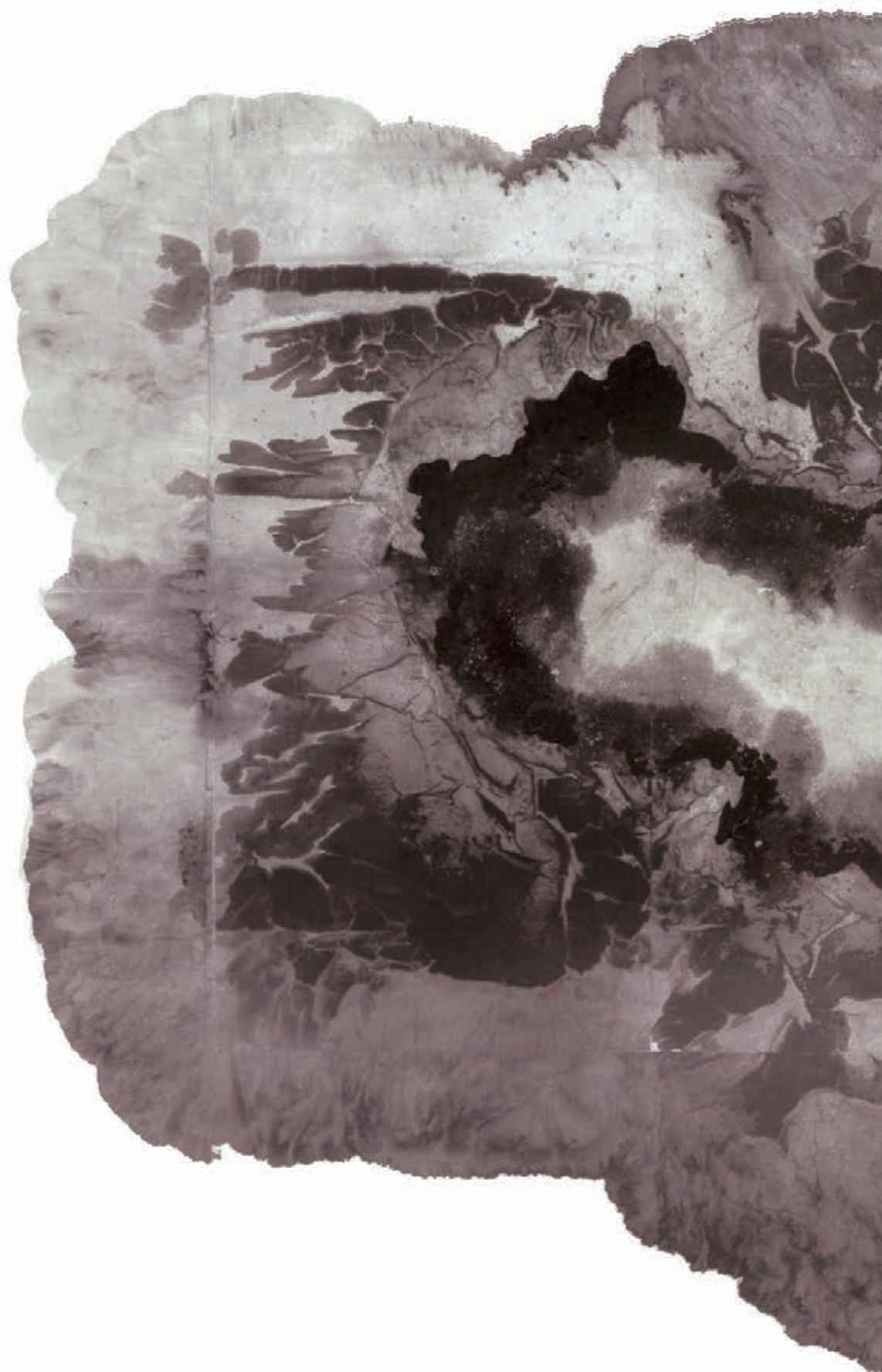
边界

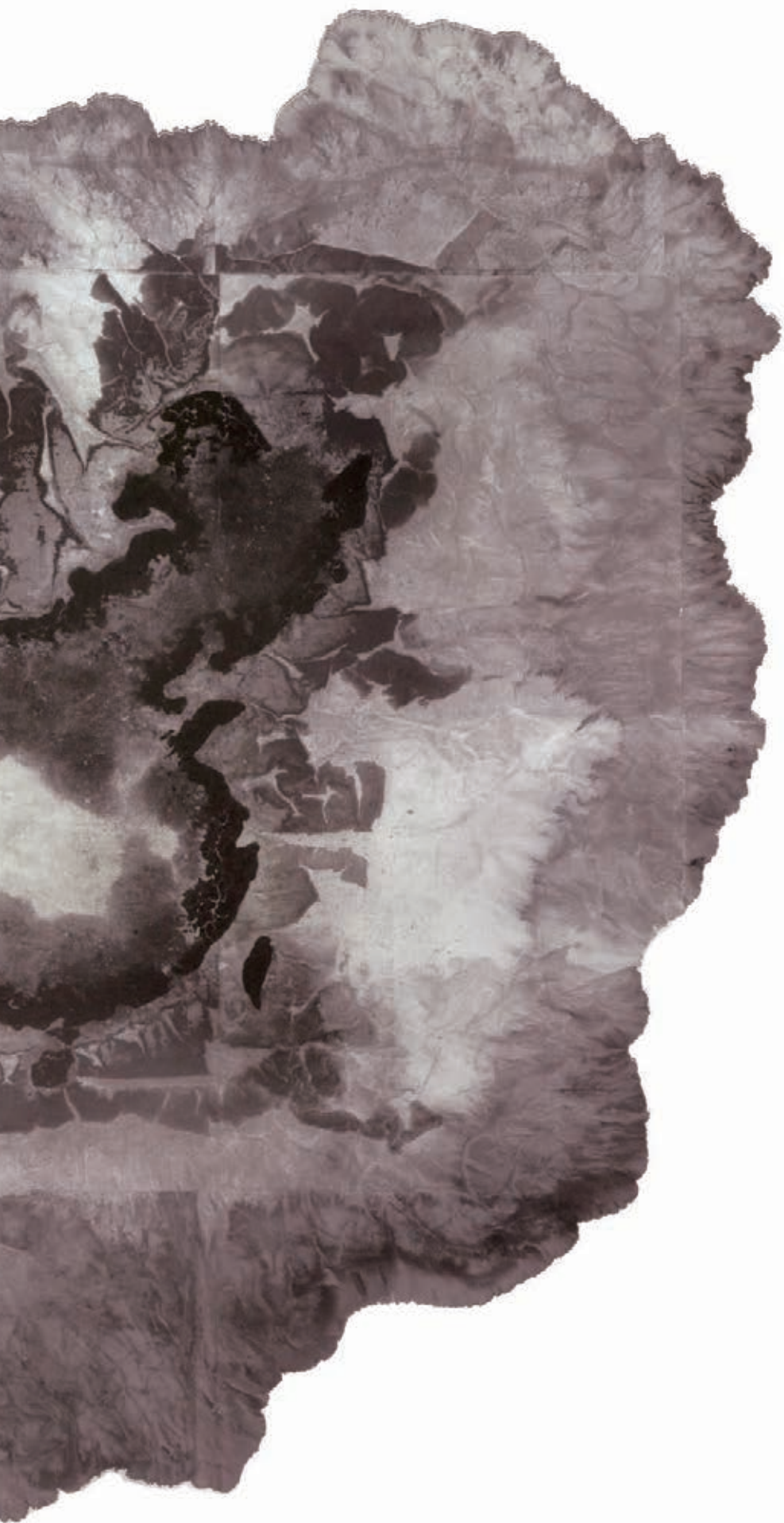
1997 | Ink, xuan paper, 水墨、宣紙 | 260 x 330 cm , 262 x 322 cm * Chengdu 成都

If making and erasing marks is one important strand of Dai Guangyu's practice, exploring the making and unmaking of one particular sort of mark—the boundary, especially the political boundary—is another related strand. As with other performance installations that treat ink as a dynamic signifying and indexing agent, in *Borderline* (1997) rather than being frozen, ink is solidified with soil instead. Soil and nation have always been semiotically intertwined in political discourse and collective consciousness, so it is fitting that Guangyu uses soil mixed with ink—China's longstanding signifier of culture and civilization, as well as a primary means by which people are cultivated into bearers of and participants in that civilization—to play with the boundaries of the Chinese Nation-State. Mixing ink and earth into a muddy substance, Guangyu sculpted the map of the People's Republic of China atop a platform of *xuan* paper. After the map dried, he allowed water to drip from above, throughout the course of the exhibition, onto the earthen map. As the soil grew progressively wetter, the ink was activated by the water and began to creep beyond the boundaries of the map, making new "borderlines" as it slowly grew. What if culture and forms of civilization were to offer alternatives to geographical, territorial notions of the nation? Perhaps culture (embodied here in ink) has the power to change the boundaries of our shared world.

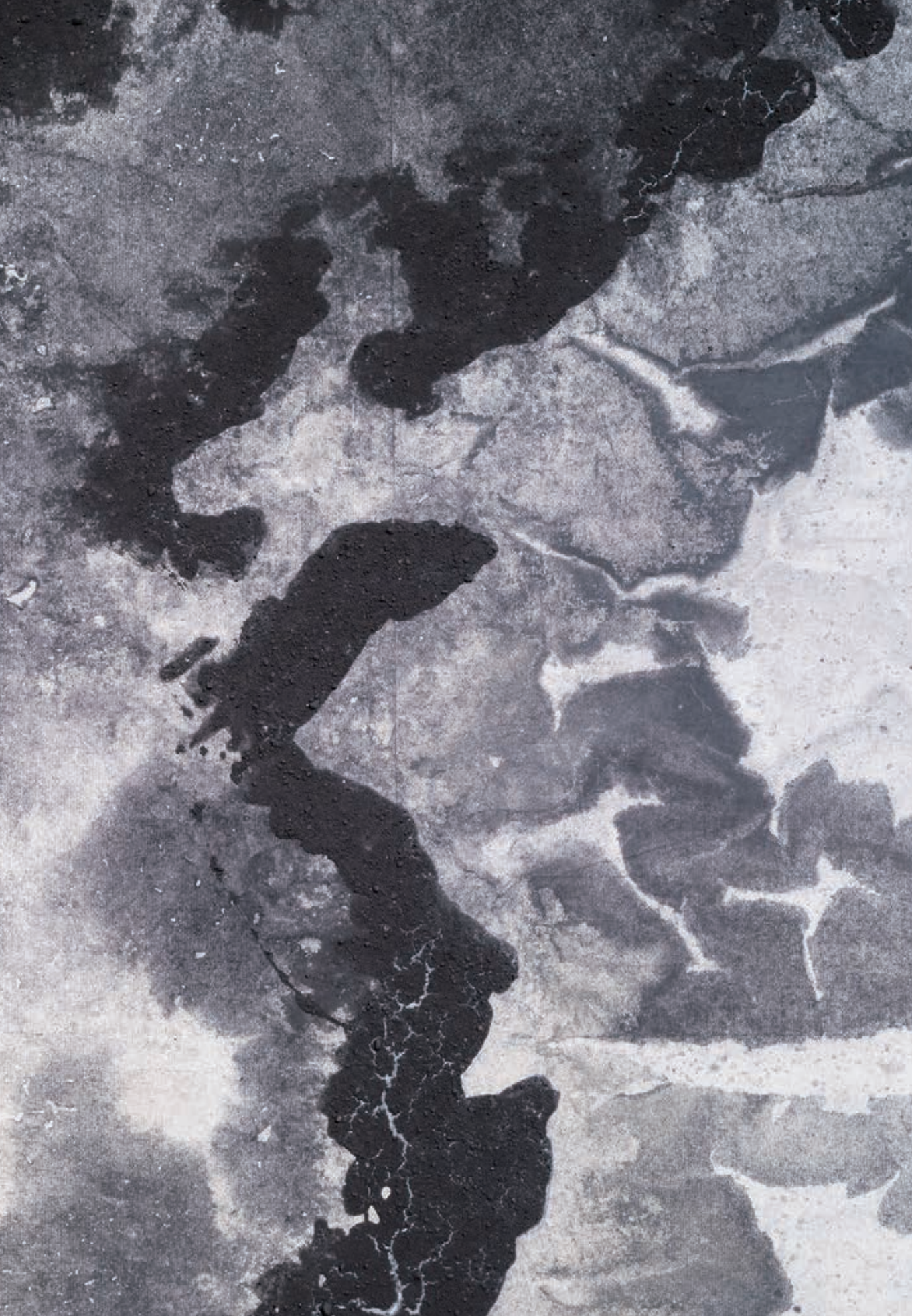
在空白宣纸上以混合着墨的泥土垒出中国地图图形，展出时，清水从空间顶部滴下融入地图。水的渗透使墨色与泥土分离，溢出的墨水四处扩散，地图轮廓变得模糊不清。流动的墨水在宣纸上散开，变换着图形，宛若一幅动态抽象画。















08

Leaving Traces

制造印痕的行为

1997 | Ink, xuan paper, 水墨、宣紙 | 80 x 53.33 cm x 2 * Chengdu 成都

If soil and ink, activated by water (as in *Borderline*) can be used to confound the geographical and cultural boundaries of the Nation-State, once ink has been subtracted, how might soil and water speak in other ways to the state of the self in the context of that land as a particular Nation-State, dominated by a particular ideological configuration of power? Dai Guangyu's performance *Leaving Traces* (1997)—executed at a cemetery in Chengdu—offered an elliptical semaphore for the subject incarcerated in its belonging to a land, yet we must resist reading the performance as the death of the death of the citizen, or a simplistic narrative of victimhood. Indeed, to leave the particularly fragile, yet nonetheless real traces of this performance, Guangyu dug his own grave into the land. He enacted his own complicity. Then he lay down in that grave, which was lined with *xuan* paper. The damp soil and the sweat from his body performed as functional substitutes for ink—they were the ink without the color, the mark that exists, but is not durably legible. Supine in the grave, sweating and unable to move, Guangyu's passive body nevertheless still leaves a mark.

Though the imprints on the *xuan* paper, like invisible ink, disappeared after the water evaporated and the paper dried, in a sense, they answer the questions he asked when he made *Marks of Corrosion* (1989): 'when the trace is erased does it still exist?' Human sweat leaves frail traces that are easy to cover up, yet even these fragile traces do exist. Ink could have made those traces more durable, more legible. Without water, ink is limited in what kinds of marks it can leave, but without ink, water leaves a less durable, less legible trace. Brute laboring bodies tell stories too, but writing and painting allows those stories to be recorded in more permanent ways, and literacy and aesthetic cultivation allows us to read them long after they have passed, and thus retain them as part of our collective consciousness. Yet the kinds of traces produced by most of Dai Guangyu's works are neither representational depictions, nor genuine abstractions. Instead, they are indexical signs of stances taken and actions that have taken place. After emerging from the grave, Guangyu covers the sweat stained *xuan* paper with loose earth, burying its traces. Yet, even hidden, even nearly invisible, the traces remain.

盛夏，戴光郁用锄头和铁铲一锹一锹地挖出一长方型土塚（墓坑），出一身汗，在坑底铺上宣纸，然后仰卧其上。静躺45分钟后，湿漉漉的土地在体温作用下形成的水蒸气体与汗水混合，渗入宣纸，留下人体印痕。

08

Leaving Traces

制造印痕的行为

Performance Sketch 行为方案





09

Shooting at Myself

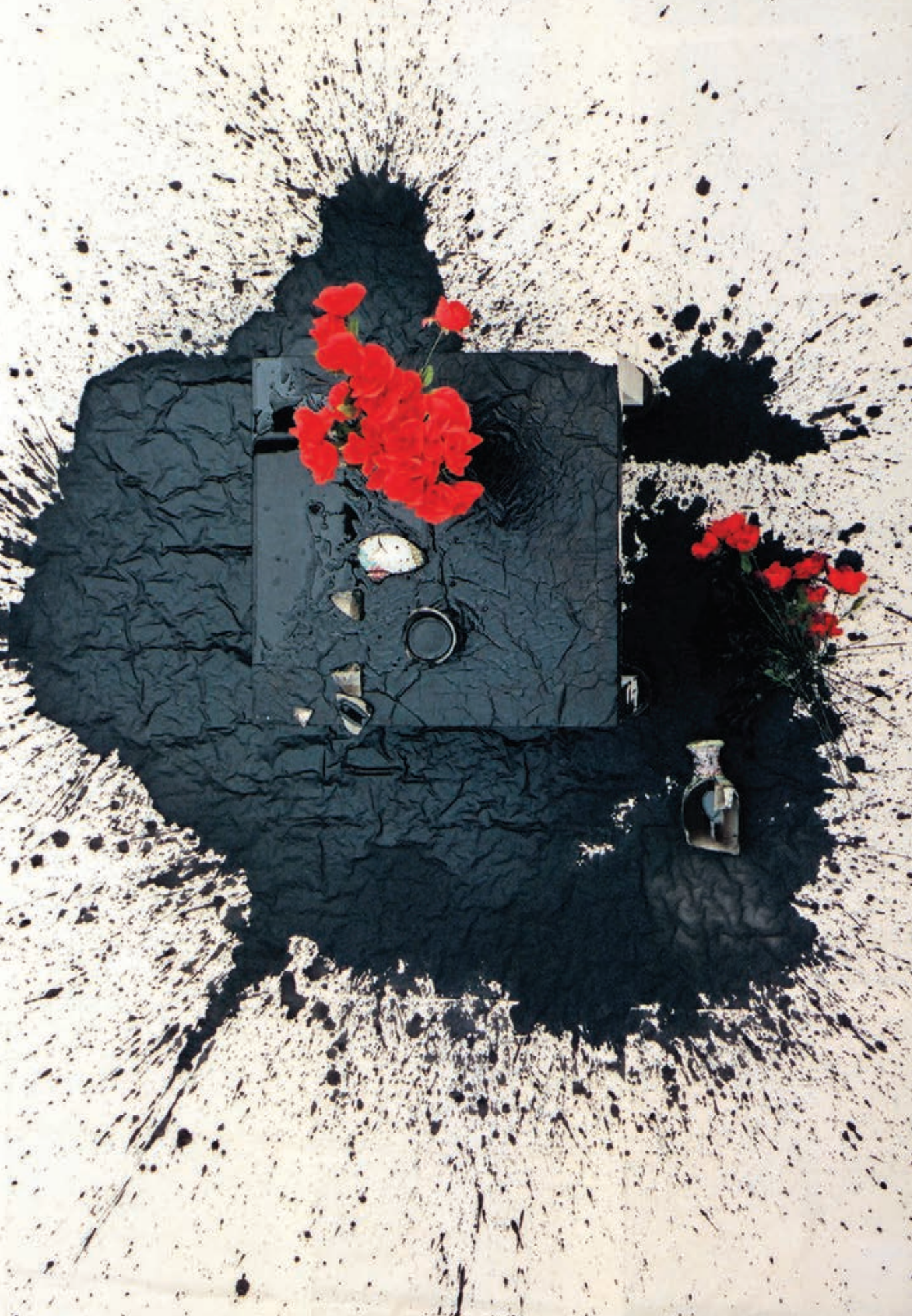
我射击自己

1997 | Ink, xuan paper, 水墨、宣纸 | 120 x 80 cm * Chengdu 成都

As many of Dai Guangyu's works show, there are many ways that traces can be covered up. Another recurring theme in his work related to the social masks we wear that hide who we really are, that obscure what we really believe, that aid us in the social and political conformity that the late Czech thinker and political activist Vaclav Havel (1936-2011) referred to as "living the lie." In the participatory performance, *Shooting at Myself* (1997), audience members were asked to don identical masks and take seats at typical Chinese school desks. Using paint-pellet rifles, they took aim and shot at pictures of themselves (their masked faces) hung on the wall ahead. In front of the wall was a table that was covered with *xuan* paper. On the table, two fake antique Chinese vases were filled with fake red flowers. The fake vases were broken by the shooters, who were shooting at their fake masked social selves. The ink spilled out onto the *xuan* paper laid out on the ground below the table, leaving traces from the violence of the shooting and the ink that bled out as a result. Shared culture and cultural expression can be both inculcated, artificial forms that dictate how to "live in the lies" and they are can also be a means for breaking those forms and doing what Havel called "living in the truth."

In this work, the ink stains preserved on the *xuan* paper, offer a powerful index of the complex attitudes and actions that took place during the performance. Rather than being a representational form transmediating the ephemeral event of the performance, the unique ink on *xuan* paper performance artifact generated, records the story of what happened there in a different language, and indexical language that is more direct and less interpretive than a representational depiction, even one seemingly transparent as a performance video or a photograph. While still and moving images can be edited, a performance artifact from Dai Guangyu's practice, such as this, captures the dynamic attitudes and actions of the event in an unmediated way that representation cannot, and thus offers an extraordinary path of access to the very substance of the work and all it embodies.

行为、装置作品“我射击自己”，1997年在成都一独立空间实施（“复制时代的人”艺术展）。现场场景是，两个头戴面具的枪手开枪射击对面墙上带着相同面具的肖像和桌上的花瓶。花瓶被子弹击中爆开，溅开的墨水流向地面宣纸上，留下墨水爆破溅地的痕迹。







09

Shooting at Myself

我射击自己

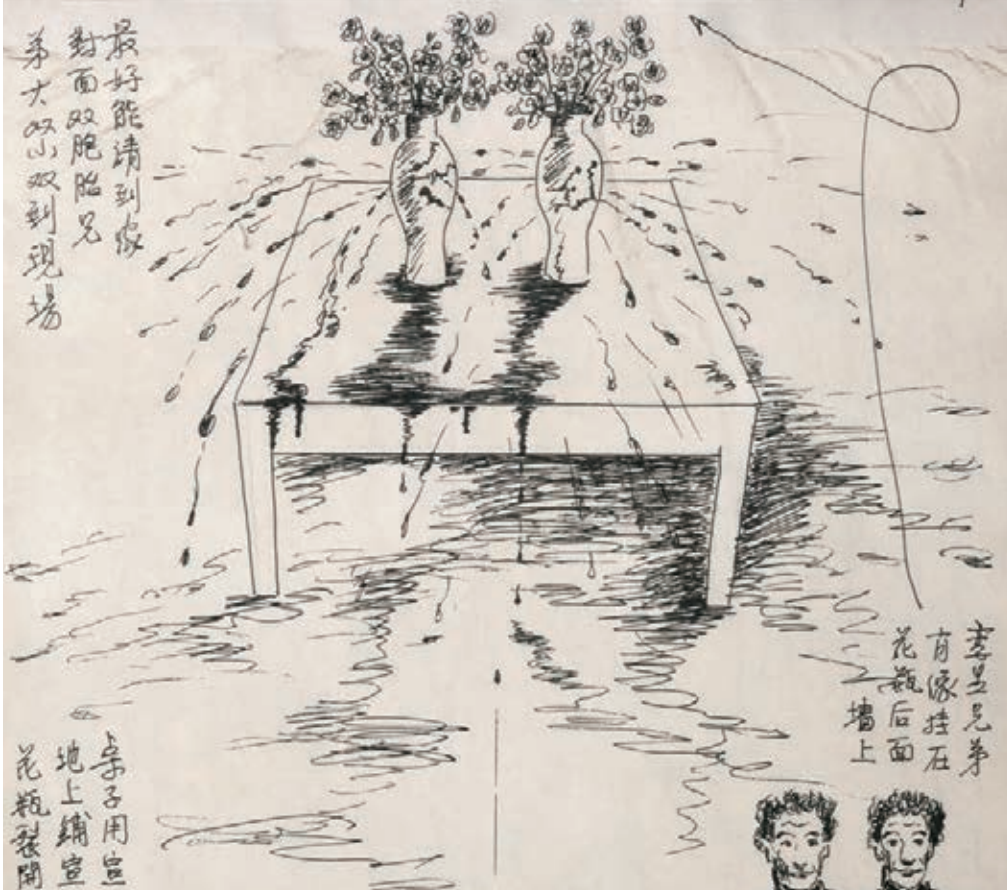
Performance installation sketch 行为装置方案

玫瑰花是塑料
花瓶中渗香精



考生兄弟照片
贴在花瓶后面
墙上供带着相
同面具的参与
者射击

最好能请到像
封面双胞胎兄
弟大小心双到现场



考生兄弟
有像挂在
花瓶后面
墙上

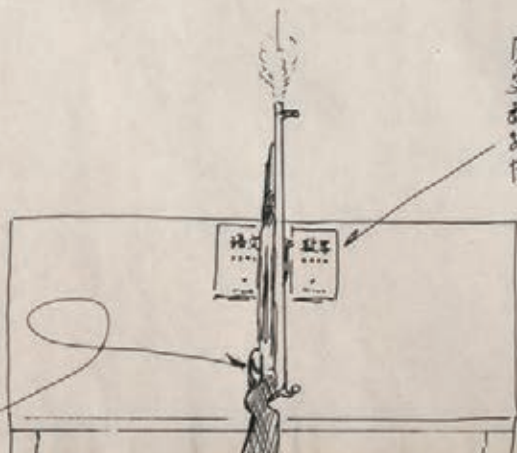
桌子用宣纸装裱
地上铺宣纸接住
花瓶装间溅出的果
壳

在小字
本上封着花瓶
射击。这是参与
性行在作品。每
位参与必须带
带好兄弟面具
开枪射击。



参与者必须带
上面具开枪射击

小学语文数学
课本或是中学
历史教材B
考生课桌



《我射击我自己》
行为装置方案 97-10



09

Shooting at Myself

我射击自己

Performance Video 行为影像, 6'26"





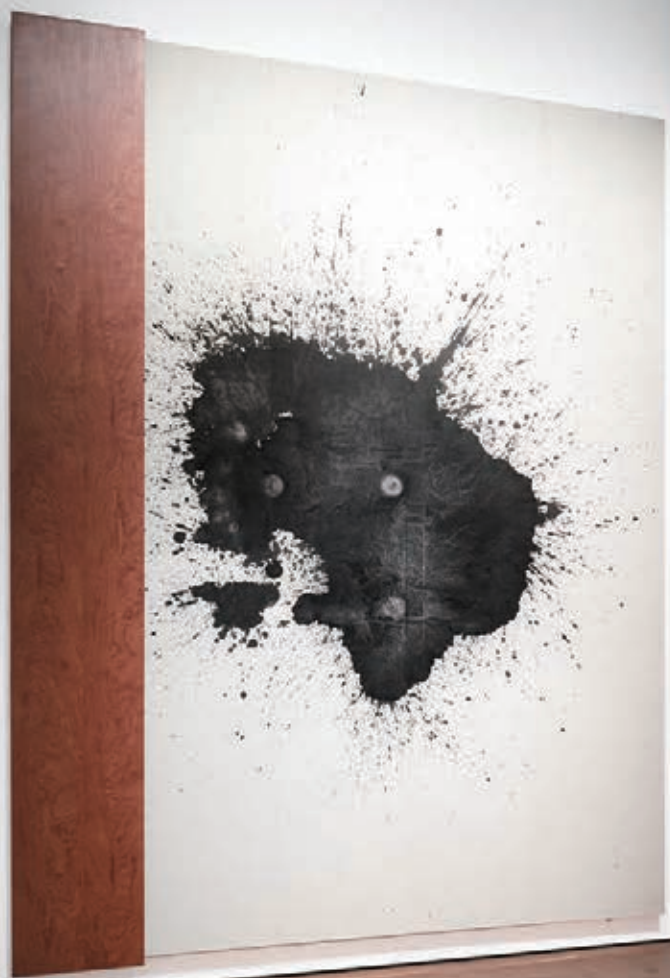
Shooting at Myself

我射击自己

Performance installation artifact 行为装置遗留物









10

Restoring - Water Traces and Ink Marks

还原——水迹墨痕

1998 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 80 x 53.33 cm * Chengdu 成都

Restoring is another in Dai Guangyu's series of performance installations using the dynamic properties of ink activated by the phase change from ice to water form. As in many of his works employing ink, Guangyu seeks to return painting materials to their primary, physical states, and from those elemental states develop an artistic language, new techniques and new methods for making works. Similar to other works such as *Marks of Corrosion* (1989), in *Restoring* (1998), a block of frozen ink is placed on a table covered with *xuan* paper, and nature allowed to take its course. The melting iced ink drips on the floor, and slowly spreads across the *xuan* paper. The ever-changing form of the spreading ink portends the unfolding of something yet unknown, still nascent in a constant state of dynamic changing of forms.

将水墨冰砖放置于宣纸装裱的桌上，任其自然溶化。墨水从桌上流到地面，在宣纸上慢慢浸润的过程，宛若一幅动态抽象水墨画。从物性角度思考艺术的原生状态，将墨加水冻成冰砖置于宣纸，在溶化、浸染、流动的感受中让人重新认识媒介和图像的生成意义，便是戴光郁语言推进地“还原”行动。



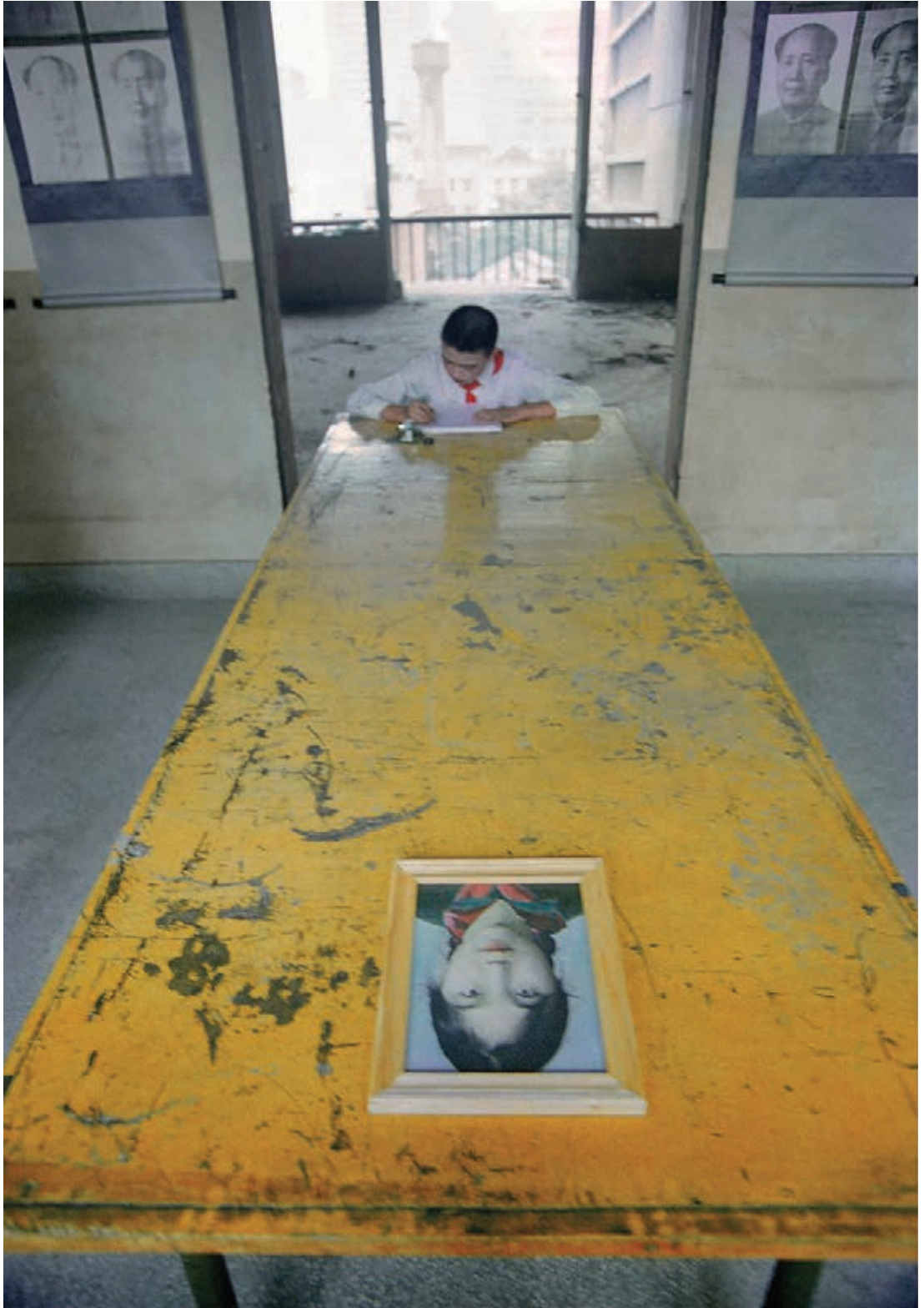
Diary

日记

1998 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 80 x 53.33 cm * Chengdu 成都

The performance of *Diary* took place in the context of the 1998 *Defense of Memory* exhibition, curated by Dai Guangyu in Chengdu on the site of a provincial public library dating from the late Qing Dynasty. Wearing the red scarf of a Young Pioneer, Dai Guangyu's son sat bent over at the end of a table and wrote in his diary using plain water instead of ink. By using only water to write, only the indexical traces of the water appeared on the paper. The characters themselves were invisible. At the other end of the table, a childhood photograph of his son's mother at the same age as their son during the performance, also dressed as a Young Pioneer. Through the interaction of the physical presence of the son and the transmediated presence of the mother in her own childhood, the kinship of the two was represented, transcending space and time. Their similar social backgrounds, in the context of Chinese politics, were also a shared connection between the two. On the wall hung a portrait of a certain founding national leader, which reinforced the political point. The state of the library awaiting demolition that was used as the site for the performance also underscored how the political skill of being good at forgetting benchmarked the realities of that historical era. This was the shared political moment of Dai Guangyu's son and the child's mother, and through the son's writing in his diary with the invisible ink of plain water, Dai Guangyu offered this performance as a form of bearing witness and an act of resistance against the erasure of memory and politically engineered conformity. Water may dry, rendering the writing invisible, but it nevertheless leaves behind an index of the act of writing in the subtle rippling of the paper where the words were once written. Action and speech, in the historical context, too, can be like this. In *Diary*, as with so many of Dai Guangyu's works, the artist reminds of the power of bearing witness against the historical losses instantiated in erasure and forgetting.

在即将拆毁的百年图书馆阅读室——四川省图书馆，一个佩带红领巾的少先队员正伏案写日记。日记用清水写就，只露水痕不见文字。条桌另一端是写日记男孩母亲儿时旧照，年龄与男孩此时相当，也是少先队员，桌子两端的血亲关系通过影像（母亲），身体在场（儿子）超时空联系，追忆，并阐明了两代人相同社会背景下的政治属性，墙上悬挂的领袖像更是强化了这一点。以等待拆毁的老图书馆建筑为创作背景，正好勾勒出善于遗忘、忙于破坏的历史事实。这是写日记男孩和他母亲的政治时刻，通过孩子的清水日记，可以见证。

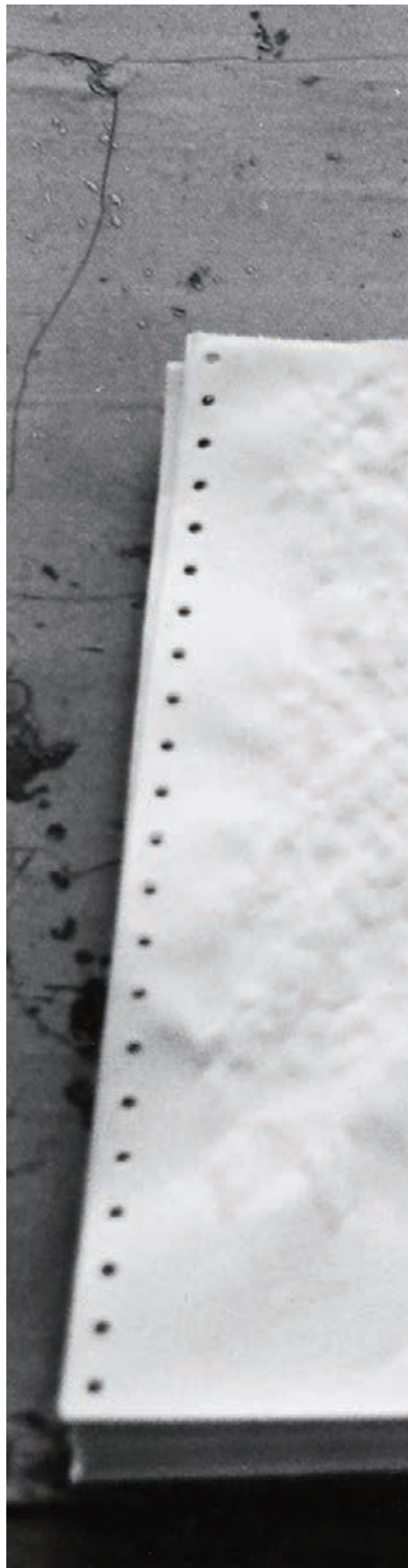


11

Diary

日记

Performance installation photograph 行为装置图片





12

Missing

走失

1999 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 80 x 53.33 cm * Chengdu 成都

On a day in early summer of 1999, which was the ten-year anniversary of a date that cannot be explicitly mentioned due to its political sensitivity, Dai Guangyu executed a public performance intervention in Chengdu to make present the absence of the unmentionable historical event from the public sphere. Unable to use direct language to explain the true nature of the performance, the artist offers an allegorical story about the performance instead.

Let us imagine two twin brothers, who are masked men in the performance, masked in the same way as the masked participants in *Shooting at Myself* (1997). Their faces are covered with the obligatory social and political veneers required to demonstrate the appropriate alienation of Everyman from their own agency, speech, and even memory. These two brothers, goes the story, along with countless others in society, experienced a terrible, catastrophic event together a decade prior. And although they personally lost neither life nor limb, they were nevertheless psychologically scared by the trauma.

On this date that was lost to public memory exactly ten years before, the allegory goes, the two twin brothers decided to go out and watch a movie. On the way there, it was as if memory was somehow reawakened, and for a moment there was the possibility of recovery from their collective aphasia. After walking out the door, this nebulous memory drew them out from the city center, where they'd begun to walk, starting in Chengdu's Tianfu Square, and proceed towards a town on the outskirts of the city, Wenjiang. They read the newspaper, rode the bus, and watched a movie in the theater.

However, so accustomed to their internalized terror they were that they couldn't help revealing traces of their state of submission to the power of the discipline to which they'd been subjected for so long. At random intervals, they exhibited certain routinized gestures typical of certain shared socio-political contexts. They would clap vigorously, as if demonstrating approval; raise a hand as if responding to a call for "all in favor" to demonstrate assent; and they would cringe as if trying to protect themselves from a blow.

Yet the normal contexts of the behavior were missing and the ones present were wholly incongruous, and thus these gestures seemed absurd. The absence

of the conventional contexts, then, drew attention to those missing contexts themselves, which were typical contexts in which social and political quiescence and conformity are collectively produced.

This play on presence and absence paralleled the constant panning of the camera to the newspapers, on which the date was prominently displayed, and in which no news whatsoever of the anniversary that was passing appeared.

Here, too, attention to this absence itself is what effectively made present that which could not be explicitly spoken. And not speaking of what could not be spoken signaled everyone else that what was not spoke of could truly not be spoken of, thus making everyone who remained silent complicit in reinforcing the power of the status quo.

Did behaving this way make them feel safer? Perhaps so. Was it so deeply ingrained as to be an automatic reflex? While moving through public space in this particular state, the two brothers went missing—that is to say, who they were and what they'd witnessed and known and remembered, with their conditioned gestures of fear and quiescence, and most of all their silence on and about this fateful date, all became invisible once again.

一对孪生兄弟在一次大劫难中虽大难不死，却是身心受创，在失忆、失语状态中，成天带着面具生活在幽闭空间不能自持。失去记忆整整十年的某日，兄弟俩忽然决定出门看电影，似乎是，记忆将被唤醒，失语有待恢复。出门后，兄弟俩被恍惚中的记忆引领，他们远离城市中心——让他们心惊胆颤的天府广场，来到卫星城市温江。可是，在压抑的十年中，过惯了幽闭生活的他们，一路上总是习惯性地露出驯服姿态，与正常状态下的路人形成巨大反差——这样做会更加安全？或许只是一种策略？看电影过程中，兄弟俩念念不忘驯化动作：举手表示同意；鼓掌申明顺从；招架说明害怕，总之，绝对驯服的肢体语言是他们感到安全的正确符号。即使这样，出门在外，社会处处是陷阱，危险总是冷不丁地到来。果然，去了一处电影院再上另一电影院，进了影院就再没见到他们出来。后来，人们只在满城张贴的寻人启事中记起他们曾经出现过。

12

Missing

走失

Performance Photograph 行为图片











13

Absorbing - Being Absorbed

吸纳·冥想

1999 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 120 x 80 cm * Chengdu 成都

The performance *Absorbing—Being Absorbed* (1999) took place as part of the *Basement Manuscript* exhibition, curated by Dai Guangyu with Zha Changping. Seated on a woven rush fiber cushion, and dressed in white, Dai Guangyu was neither meditating, nor lost in thought as his pose might suggest. Instead, he is swilling a baby bottle of black liquid (which is coffee), while ink continually drips down onto his body from a bottle suspended from the ceiling. By the time he has finished drinking, his white shirt is completely saturated with ink. The *xuan* paper beneath him is also stained black. In this performance, Guangyu used coffee to stand for western culture and the ink dripping down on him referenced Chinese culture. Different cultural forces are absorbed in different ways. For much of Chinese history, ink was a dominant medium for the cultivation, and for the transmission of important aspects of Chinese civilization. Through written language, literacy, reading, writing, calligraphy, and painting practices, individuals and populations were inculcated with various rituals that defined what it meant to be Chinese, be cultured, or even to be civilized. Now, with weakening of so many elements of traditional Chinese culture domestically, and the influx of western culture (albeit often watered down, or syncretically hybridized) from the outside, ink no longer plays the same pivotal and widespread role it once did in Chinese life. In this performance, Guangyu meditates on the ways different cultural mediums shape us inside and out.

戴光郁一身白色着装端坐于蒲团，他不在冥想，而是在吸吮奶瓶中的咖啡。与此同时，悬挂于屋顶的墨水瓶不停地往吸吮者身体输送墨水。咖啡喝完，白色着妆已被墨水浸透，由开始的全白变为全黑。在这里，咖啡象征西方文化，墨水当是指代本土文化。从视觉上观察，墨水浸透全身的结果似乎在宣示水墨的魅力和力量，但不可否认的是，吸吮奶瓶的行为与咖啡入肚的事实，应是作品表达要点。如果视野开阔，从灵魂深处展现的人类情怀才是真实可信，心灵共通的。就艺术而言，思想关切之深度，精神述求之广度，咖啡，抑或墨，有何不可？有何不同？重要的是，媒介转换的语言切入，有否建立在修辞运思而升华为思想昭示？



14

Landscape - Feng Shui

山水·风水

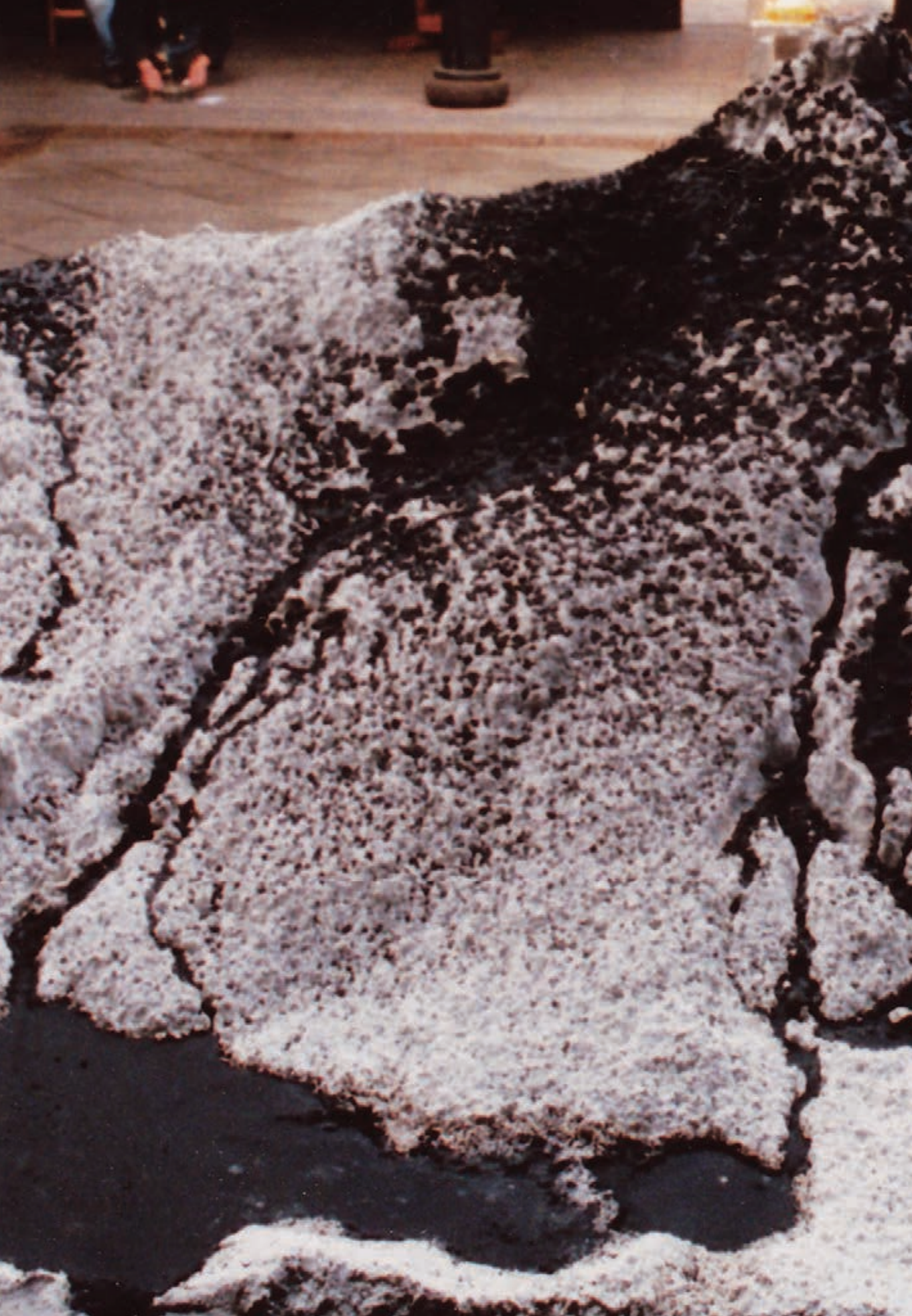
2001 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 80 x 60 cm, 53.33 x 80 cm * Chengdu 成都

As part of the *Holding the White Piece* exhibition, curated by Dai Guangyu with Zhou Chunya, the performance installation *Landscape - Feng Shui* (2001) explores the concept of *feng shui*—sometimes translated as geomancy in English, but which literally means "wind and waters"—in the context of the traditional Chinese concept of landscape, or *shan shui* (which literally means "mountains and waters"). *Feng shui* is closely connected to Daoist thought and is a philosophical system and set of strategic practices devised to harmonize the built, human environment with the natural one in order to optimize the flow of *qi*—vital energies that join the cosmos and the terrestrial world, including the human world and human body. Feng shui is also considered one of the "five arts" of Chinese metaphysics.

As such, Guangyu chose to stage the piece in a traditional northern, four-sided *siheyuan* courtyard, in which he has arrayed a mound of flour into the shape of a "mountain" (*shan*) range. Beneath the "mountain," *xuan* paper has been mounted on a tabletop. The ink (which functions as the *shui*, or water, here) organically follows the forms of the "mountain" trickling down onto the paper. It seeps into the surface of the table, leaving traces that resemble those found in nature, such as rivers and tributaries.

墨水从屋檐滴下，落在面粉垒出的“山”上。“山”的下面是宣纸装裱的桌子，墨水顺着“山体”往下流，浸入桌面，一如自然界形成的河流湖泊。中国传统美学思想里，山水概念昭示下的图绘摹本不仅是可居可游的现实冀愿，抑或更是寄托文人情怀、甚至乌托邦思想的载体。故而山水画作为一门独立学科和类别，一直是艺术主流，思想领衔。“风水”观则主要讲求人的自然顺应和运筹，讲品质的内在性结构与外部环境的关联，讲改变与顺应的辩证关系，并且寻求解决之道——虽然有失偏颇迷信，对人的生存现状毕竟重要。如上两项在当代，早被日新月异现代科技带来的好处搞晕的人遗忘。戴光郁在古式庭院实施这个作品，借“以小观大”概念重提昔日旧论，显然是有借古喻今反思现代的现实批判意义。





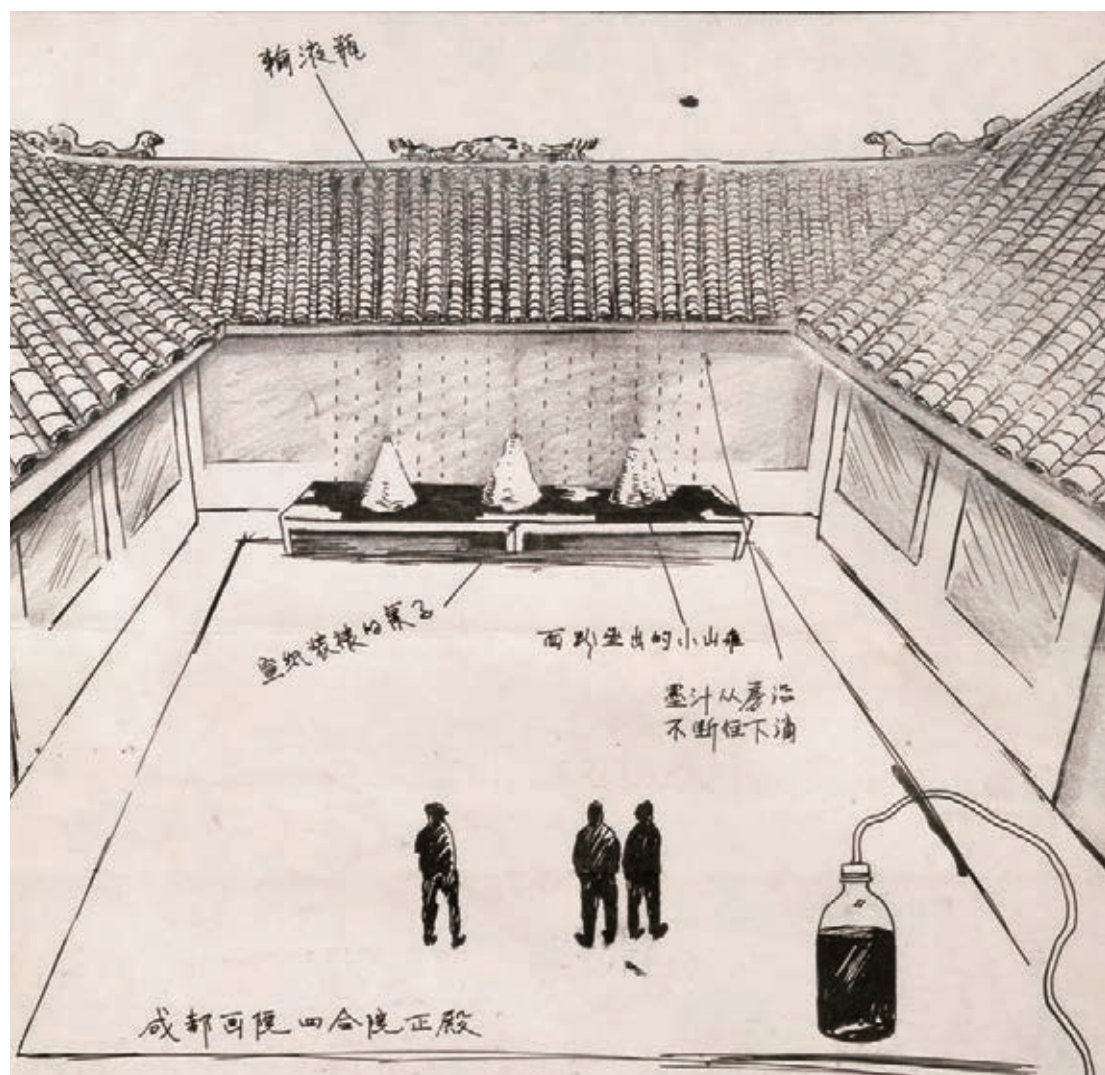


14

Landscape - Feng Shui

山水·风水

Performance installation sketch 行为装置方案



《山水·風水》

作品实施方案

“执白”艺术展参展方案

2000.12

1. 翰液瓶中盛满墨汁
2. 展出时, 墨汁从屋顶雨水沿滴下
3. 桌子用鱼纸装裱, 上面要出三个面状堆
4. 墨汁从屋顶雨水沿滴下, 注入面状的鱼纸裱过的桌上, 形成一幅水墨奇观

《山水·風水·雲与韻》

15

White is Not Necessarily Good

白色不一定好

2001 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 80 x 53.33 cm * Chengdu 成都

Another prominent thematic in Dai Guangyu's works involves the symbolism of color. Sometimes he works within traditional color associations, and other times he deconstructs and inverts. In the performance *White is Not Necessarily Good* (2001), the artist plays with traditional cultural conventions associating white (*bai* 白) with goodness, purity, truthfulness and innocence, on the one hand, and black (*hei* 黑) being associated with evil, dirtiness, impurity, lies, cheating, deceit, and underhanded dealings. Conventional Chinese expressions such as *hei shehui* – literally, "black society," meaning mafia; *hei shou* – "black hands," meaning those pulling the puppet strings or engaging in devious machinations behind the scenes causing harm by manipulating others into wrong action and behavior; *xin hei* – "black hearted," meaning heartless, cruel, ruthless, unprincipled; *xi hei qian*, to "lack money," i.e. to engage in money laundering; and so on.

Wearing all white again, as he did in *Absorbing—Being Absorbed* (1999) and with his body also painted white, Dai Guangyu sits at a table to drink from an array of bottles: soy sauce, black vinegar, coffee, clear water, red wine, and ink. Again, as with *Absorbing*, different liquids reference different cultural traditions, and this smorgasbord of choices reflects the cultural confusion of contemporary life. After imbibing from each bottle, he vigorously spits out the liquid. All must be expelled.

Guangyu contends that Chinese society has been corrupted to the point where almost nothing is innocent and honest "white" and almost everything is infused with the nefarious ethos of cheating and lying "black" (concepts that we must remember are used in a culturally specific sense, rather than having any racially specific meanings in this context), has become the norm. Think of Deng Xiaoping's famous pronouncement at the outset of Reform and Opening: "It doesn't matter whether the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice."

In Guangyu's assessment, this way of thinking in terms of unequivocal "black and white" binary oppositions between good and bad, innocent and guilty, clean and dirty, honest and deceitful, has actually contributed to degradation of Chinese culture. He argues that through the oppressive mechanisms of authoritarian politics, people have lost their independence of character and free thought. Under the disciplining conditions designed to create tame, docile political

subjects, ordinary people have to endure and, indeed have become accustomed to, a different sort of routine inversion of "black and white," as blatant lies are rendered official truth. For example, he says, we can use the literary idiom for deliberate misrepresentation—"to point at a deer and call it a horse"—to describe today's politics of truth. People are not so much required to believe, as they are to publically accept the designation of a deer as a horse. This is what Vaclav Havel wrote about in his essay *The Power of the Powerless* (1979), when he talked about the effects of pretending the emperor is not naked, and the power that the powerless have to stop "living in the lie" and start "living in the truth," embodied in the act of publicly admitting that the emperor isn't wearing anything at all.

戴光郁一身白色着装，肉也是白色。他时而端坐，时而举杯豪饮，将排列在桌上的酱油醋、咖啡净水红酒和墨喝入口中，然后呕吐，一泻如注。作为思想隐喻，过程中，施行者喝饮料（美好生活），喝墨水（文化灌输），呕吐（消费、过剩），几近失控的身体在倒影中（本来已不属于自己），已然如呕吐物一块儿留在了桌上——宣纸承接了它，一如思想的印痕。

15

White is Not Necessarily Good

白色不一定好

Performance installation photograph 行为装置图片



16

Landscape, Ink, Ice

山水 · 墨水 · 冰水

2004 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 120 x 80 cm x 2 * Germany 德国

While much of Dai Guangyu's performance installation practice employs the dynamic medium of frozen ink-ice, *Landscape, Ink, Ice* (2004), puts ink onto ice out in nature, and follows what happens as it thaws. This photographic diptych captures the durational land art performance installation that Dai Guangyu did at Lake Chiemsee, in Germany. Exploring the relative powers of nature and culture, Dai Guangyu wrote the Chinese characters for "landscape" (*shan shui*—literally, mountains and water) on the ice of the lake—between actual mountains and water. Over time, however, as the ice melted, the characters began to blur until they became unreadable. Just as many of his works deal with the activating power of water in ink to make a medium that can produce durable texts and images legible to the trained eye—texts and images that index inner states of mind and being and record the dynamic traces of action—here something else emerges. Before the awesome power of natural forces, the melting of the ice actually erases the human trace, rendering it progressively illegible, and finally all traces of it are gone. For Guangyu, this is a striking reminder of the *feng shui* principle of working with rather than against nature, and the necessity of human humility in the face of that natural world, against which we have trespassed so destructively. In the end, perhaps nature has the power to erase us if we cannot learn to live with it more harmoniously.

书写在冰面上的文字“山水”，在真山真水对应中形成一种诡异的视幻效果，或许这能唤起一种审美想像。但是，当文字随着冰消雪溶的季节变化由显象（在场）到消失（缺席），固化在人们头脑中与“山水”有关的美学概念，会因时间流失的物理结构发生改变而转化为形上思考。文字退场，或者说文字意涵依附于景观所引伸的赋义此时失效，推导出更高层面的思考——哲学的或宗教的，应该才是“山水·墨水·冰水”所要追问的。









17

Feng Shui, Ink, Ice

风水 · 墨水 · 冰水

2004-2005 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 80 x 53.33 x 3 cm * Beijing 北京

Feng Shui, Ink, Ice (2004-2005) was a part of a series of land art performance installation works that Dai Guangyu did in public space in Beijing, following *Landscape, Ink, Ice* (2004), which he executed in Germany. In this piece, which dealt with the same set of issues related to the power of nature versus the power of culture, he wrote the characters for Chinese geomancy (*feng shui*) on the surface of Lake Houhai with black ink using Songti script. As explored in his work *Landscape, Feng Shui* (2001), *feng shui* is the traditional philosophical study of harmonizing the flows of *qi*—vital energy—between the natural and the built environment. Over time, as the ice melted, the character lost form and was absorbed back into the lake, leaving only water.

此作是戴光郁04年实施于北京各公共空间的系列地景艺术之一。利用北方隆冬季节湖泊结冰的特点，用墨汁以古宋字体在北京后海冰面上书写“风水”二字。其场景择取，与“风水”词意对应的是皇家园林的气派；因时间流失，冰消雪溶物理特征使文字退场，写有“风水”的风景不再，留在那里的还是水。这一景象，昭示着不朽神话的可疑和人造盛境的脆弱。





18

Incontinence

失禁

2005 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 80 x 53.33 cm * Beijing 北京

The performance, *Incontinence* (2005), took place at the Dashanzi International Art Festival and speaks to the strand of Dai Guangyu's practice concerned with the Chinese Nation-State, citizenship and subjecthood, belonging, power and powerlessness, and the relationship between politics and culture. Dai Guangyu chose to use the medical term for 'incontinence' as a title as a metaphor for myriad problems latent within Chinese society, against which ordinary Chinese people feel helpless and powerless to change, such as environmental pollution and ecological catastrophe. In this performance, the artist hangs from a high ceiling at Beijing Tokyo Art Project in 798 Art Factory. He holds a chicken in his arms. The chicken is, of course, a metaphor for China, drawing the famous saying being that the map of China resembles a chicken in shape. The figure dangling from the ceiling resembles someone in the process of dying by hanging. Yet he keeps blowing on a child's party horn noisemaker, as if to signal the absurdity of his predicament. Guangyu explores the pervasive sense of helplessness of China's masses, and loss of control over themselves. Leaking from the trouser leg of the dangling, incontinent figure is ink rather than urine. Do the problems of a culture all leak out sooner or later? Are the problems, perhaps, more than a simplistic top-down oppression, but something more complex that also comes from inside of the body politic and its citizens? Guangyu spins, and blows the noisemaker like a helpless child, and yet the chicken that represents China, is nevertheless in his hands. Indeed, he seems to suggest, responsibility for the state of the nation is still in our weak and unsteady hands, and this holds even as we are seemingly impotent (incontinent). We are left to contemplate what kind of power it is that the powerless have.

这是病理学专用词，说人的官能出了问题，排泄系统处于失控状态，比如不能自持地遗尿叫“失禁”。借“失禁”为作品命名，意在揭示潜伏于社会的种种问题。比如日益恶化、同时又不受批评监督的环境污染……问题太多，不胜枚举。模拟自缢的身体怀抱一只鸡，分明是一种暗示，无可挽回的灾难似乎正步步紧逼。那只鸡显然象征中国（说中国版图像只鸡）；而垂死者口中不停地吹捣口拉哨（一种儿童玩具），意指大众的无知和无奈。失禁者裤裆里遗出的不是尿而是墨，乃是一种暗喻，意在说明问题根源，还是文化出了问题。



Incontinence

失禁

Performance installation sketch 行为装置方案

Dai Guangyu

戴光郁作品三案

作品名：《失禁 Incontinence》

实施时间15分钟

垂悬者嘴里衔着
一只儿童伸缩口
哨。

怀抱一只
公鸡

墨水从脚
跟滴下入
地面暖盆

此案系2001年作出，
一直未有机会实施。2005年
4月北京大山子国际艺术节
董强、舒畅策划的《越界
语言》上实施。此作情况
见2002年戴光郁与高名路
对话。“丰收”展画册。

垂悬者身着白
色服装，手与
脸亦涂成白色

书包里暗藏机
关，墨水从里
面流入裤裆
再往下流向脚跟



地上放置宣纸，
宣纸上有中国地图图型

戴光郁
2005.5

19

Floating Object

漂浮物

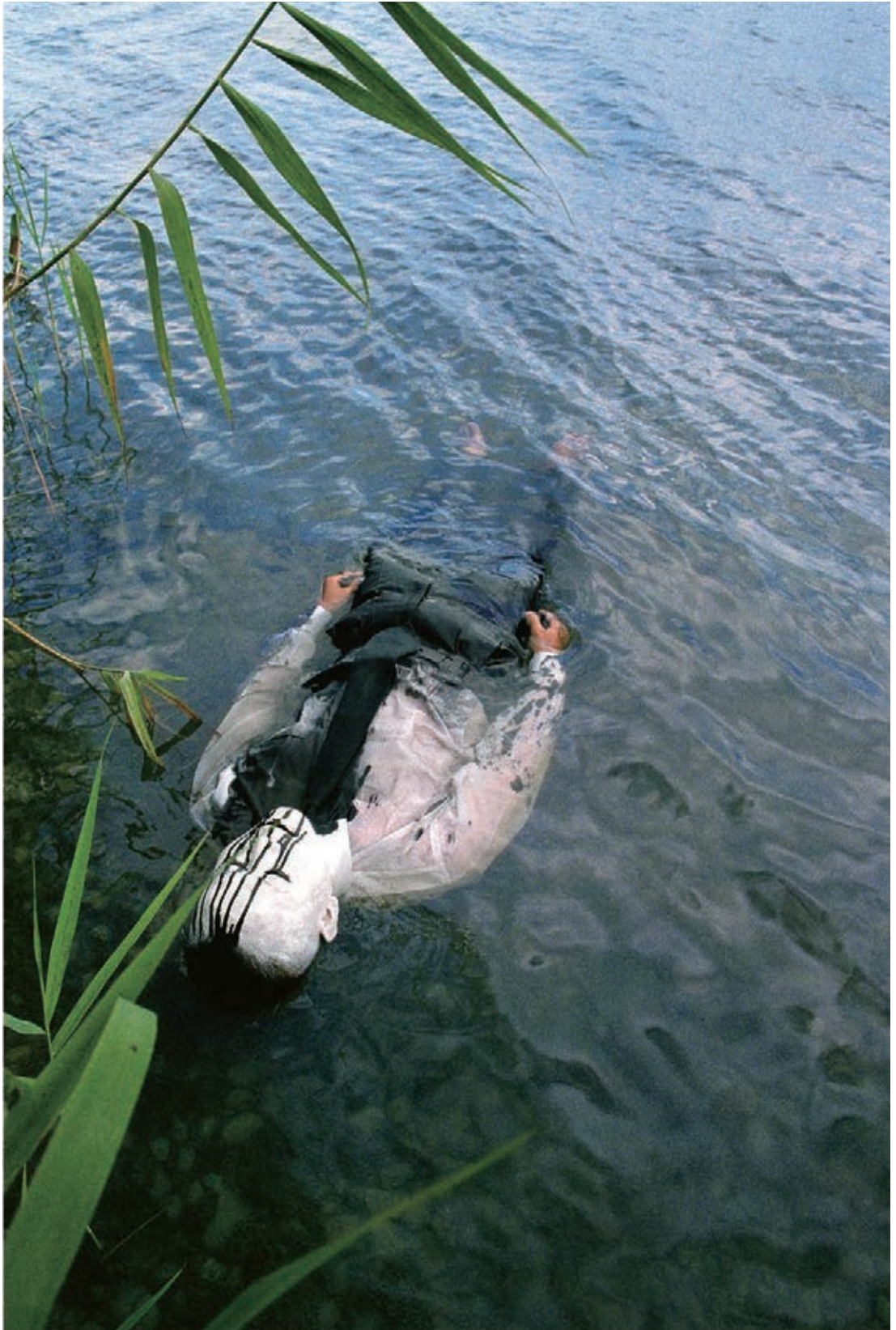
2006 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 80 x 53.33 cm * Germany 德国

Power and powerlessness, nature and culture, and the sickness of our times, are all themes with which Dai Guangyu grapples continuously with in his practice. In *Floating Object* (2006), the apparently powerlessness of the hanging man in *Incontinence* (2005), is echoed in the body language of the moribund figure in this performance. Here a chanting body covered with spilled ink floats like duckweed in the water of Lake Chiemsee, in Bavaria, Germany. It seems as forlorn as the moment before death, helpless, past language, and in a state of being that is a state of unbecoming. Is this an omen of a life about to end, Guangyu asks, or could it be that the body is already dead? If this is a portent of a critically ill way of life, what is the semiotic role that is played here by ink, especially ink diluted in a vast body of water? The tragic tone of the performance turns on the intimate connection between ink and traditional culture in China, and highlights what the artist considers the degraded current state of culture.

Indeed, for Guangyu, the ossification of ink culture's original vitality and its corruption by the distorted values of our contemporary world, are a kind of death of the original cultural coherence that he believes characterized the traditional culture during an early point in history. He asks what we can make of this state of things? The passive, moribund state of the ink-covered floating body of the drowned man is a refraction of China's culture suicide; and this work is the artist's funeral dirge for the loss of those coherent and vital traditions, and homage to the ghosts of this lost culture.

一个身体满附墨汁的吟唱者浮萍一般，飘荡水面，然若弥留之际的茫然。是将要失去生命体征的前兆？抑或他本已死去？既然是表现生命垂危的哀痛，垂死者为何又身赋墨汁？这是要点。想到水墨与传统文化的关连如此紧密，看到今日作贱传统文脉关系割断思想渊源，并声言只因现代化那些人如此急迫，如此鲁莽地行为，不禁悲从中来。文明劫难如此巨裂，前所未有的，真是用心险恶地谋杀。而暴徒正是受害者的子孙，试问大家作何感想？

这是《漂浮物》提出的问题。并非只为滥情娱悲似黯然神伤，也不只是哀痛过度的煽情，而是警喻世人，身赋墨汁溺水者的垂死状态，是自毁文明的现实折射，是失落文明哀歌一曲，是为昔日文明叫魂。



20

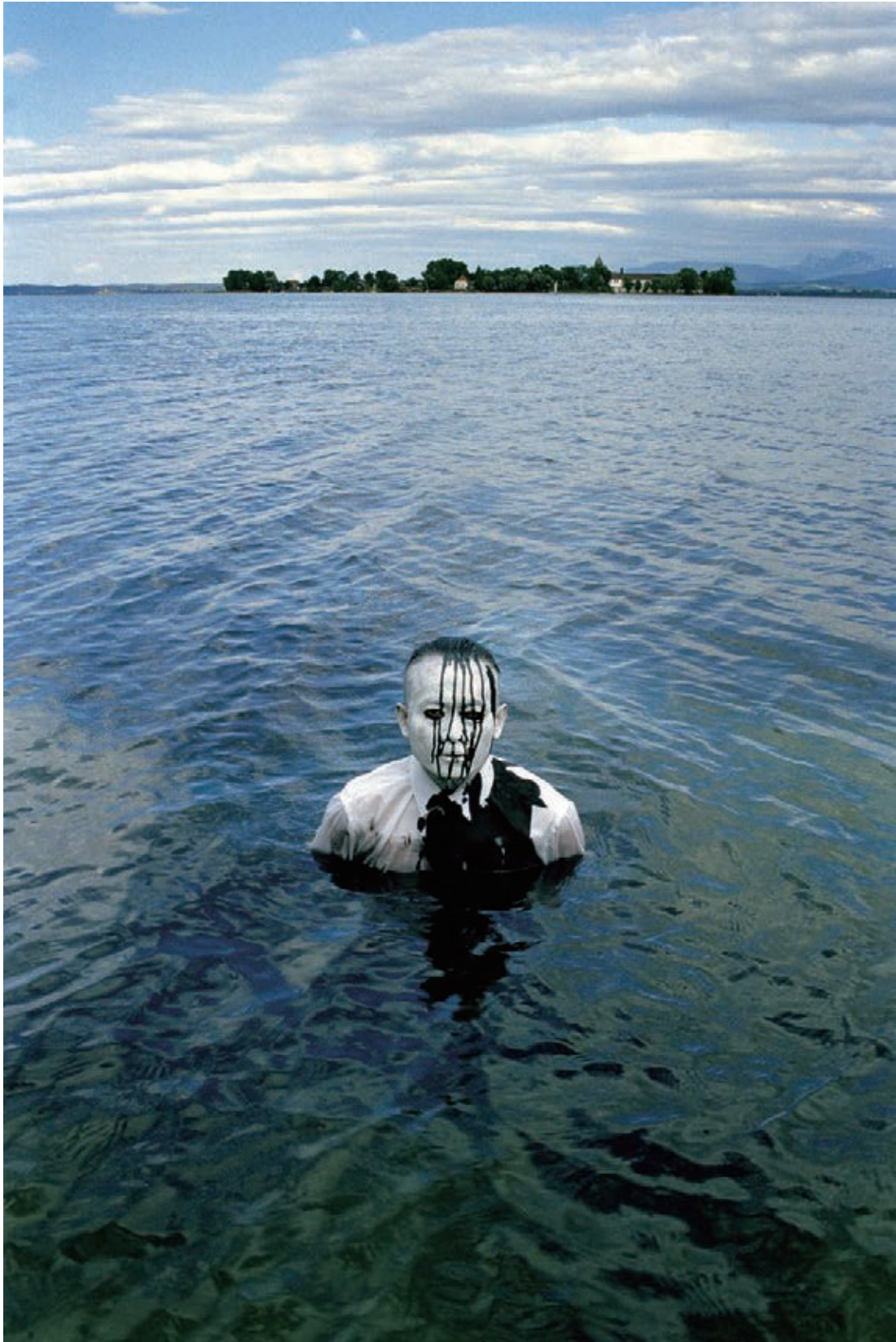
Picturesque Landscape

风景美如画

2006 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 80 x 53.33 cm * Beijing 北京

Working with a related set of questions about the ambiguities of cultural syncretism, the performance *Picturesque Landscape* (2006) also takes place in Lake Chiemsee, in Bavaria, Germany. In this work, Dai Guangyu stands partly submerged in the lake. Ink drips down his painted face, flowing around the contours of his head, and then from his body it seeps into the lake water. The forms made by the ink dripping from his face resemble an ink painting, adding ink to the natural scenery, like a subtle transfusion of eastern culture. Unlike the distinctly morbid tone of *Floating Object* (2006), this work, made simultaneously, offers a different model of cultural diffusion and change that is neither annihilation nor assimilation, but rather a hybrid blending that takes place between two substances that already share much in common. Water is, after all, that which can activate the dynamic properties of ink, and it is neither properly eastern nor western but something that transcends national geographies. Unlike in the previous image, the water from the lake, coupled with the body bearing the ink, receives the ink rather than diluting it to oblivion. In this way, the tension between the different models of cultural change posited in these two works, resembles the questions posed in *Absorbing—Being Absorbed* (1999), as well as *White is Not Necessarily Good* (2001), and *Incontinence* (2005).

墨水从上至下顺着头颅往下流，通过身体渗入湖水；白色衬衫和面部墨色浸润所构成的水墨意象，使整个景观弥漫着一股诗意的神彩，侷侷怪异，却气韵生动。由于行为现场德国巴伐利亚基姆湖的特殊背景——表演者身后是当地著名天主教胜地“女岛”，在异域风光及文化氛围里实施行为的现场，其符号凸显与审美特性毫无例外地赋有中国色彩——或戴光郁色彩，恰好引伸出一个问题，“水墨”作为一种媒介，它的美学背景是否具有普适性意义？它的视觉张力和感知经验是否可以人类共享？戴光郁似有话说，《风景美如画》似有答案。



21

When the Waters Recede, the Rocks Appear

水落石出

2007 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 80 x 60 cm x 2 * Beijing 北京

In the same vein of inquiry and mode of exploration as works such as *Restoring - Water Traces and Ink Marks* (1998), *When the Waters Recede, the Rocks Appear* (2007) allows ink to manifest its elementary materiality as an antidote to the vitiated superficial elegance that so much of ink painting has become, in Dai Guangyu's view. To make this dynamic performance installation work, the artist froze ink into a large brick of ink-ice, and placed it on a bed that was installed in the Red Star gallery during his solo exhibition there. He had painted the bed sheets with a classical landscape. He rendered this landscape in the language of Dong Qichang (1555–1636) —a renowned painter, calligrapher, who one of the most influential art-critics and arbiters of taste during the late Ming Dynasty. Dong Qichang changed the way Chinese art was categorized at the time in ways that persisted long after his death, dividing his contemporaries into what he called the Northern and Southern Schools. These schools were characterized, respectively, by sedulous, even pedantic artistic language that sought to dutifully depict an objective external natural world, on the part of the Northern School, and a more expressive visual engaged with nature through subjective individual perceptions, on the part of the Southern. Dong Qichang considered himself to be amongst the latter. Yet in Guangyu's view, this relatively individualist, free language itself became an authoritative set of aesthetic criteria that came to dominate Chinese ink painting, eventually leading to an ossified code for creating work that lacked the inner vitality and originality that Dong Qichang had championed.

Thus Dai Guangyu chose to dutifully, even sedulously imitate these stylistic conventions in his illustration on the bed sheet, and this authoritative image, was then obliterated by the slow melting of the block of frozen ink that he placed atop the sheet. Once standards dictating creative expression become dogmatically authoritative, a rupture is required to reactivate the expressive power of ink. By using the material nature of ink itself, rather than simply asserting a different, yet specific expressive visual language to replace the old standard, Guangyu is saying something larger about discursive power and authority in relation to the dominant standards that define the tastes of a given era. When the water recedes, the rocks appear, he suggests—in other words, perhaps only when the dominant structures or stripped back can the basic nature of ink and all its possibilities be returned to us anew.

将墨水冻成的冰砖放置于一张床上，白色床单上有作者临摹的古典山水画。展览过程中，悬挂在屋顶净水瓶中的清水通过输液器传输，一滴一滴地落在水墨冰砖上。水与冰墨交融溶化，在床单上渗开。墨水散开的过程，宛若一幅动态抽象水墨画。冰墨溶化到最后一刻，留下一块石头在床的中心。而此时，古典山水画已被墨水覆盖，映入眼帘的，只是若隐若现的线条和墨水遗痕。

When the Waters Recede, the Rocks Appear

水落石出

Performance installation sketch 行为装置方案

《水滴石穿》装置方案

2007年红星画廊老那个展

借喻:

水滴石穿,各各水位下降,使石头
 显露出来。比喻事情真相大白。
 “野芳发而幽香,佳木秀而繁阴,
 风霜高洁,水落而石出者,山间之
 四时也。”(欧阳修《醉翁亭记》)
 “山高月小,水落石出。”(苏轼
 《后赤壁赋》)

近义词:真相大白,原形毕露

反义词:匿影藏形

双人床上
 白色床单
 床单临摹
 古典山水

水墨冰砖
 置放於床的
 中央,任其
 自然溶化



水墨冰砖
 内藏一块
 石头,这样,展览结束
 时水墨砖完全溶化后
 留在床单上的原来呈石
 石一块。故曰:水滴石出是也。

水滴石穿:水不停地滴,石头也能
 被滴穿。喻只要有恒心,不断努力,事
 情就一定能成功。

魔杵成针
 绳锯木断



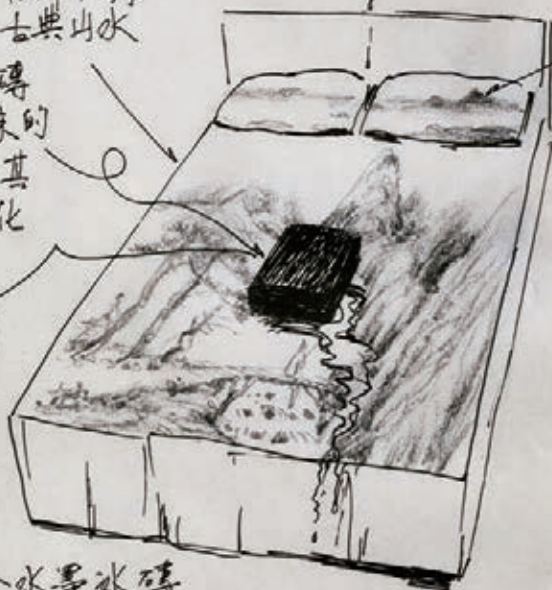
净水瓶往
 下输水

水滴用输水器
 软管控制开关
 控制水流量。

枕头上临摹
 古典山水
 横卷

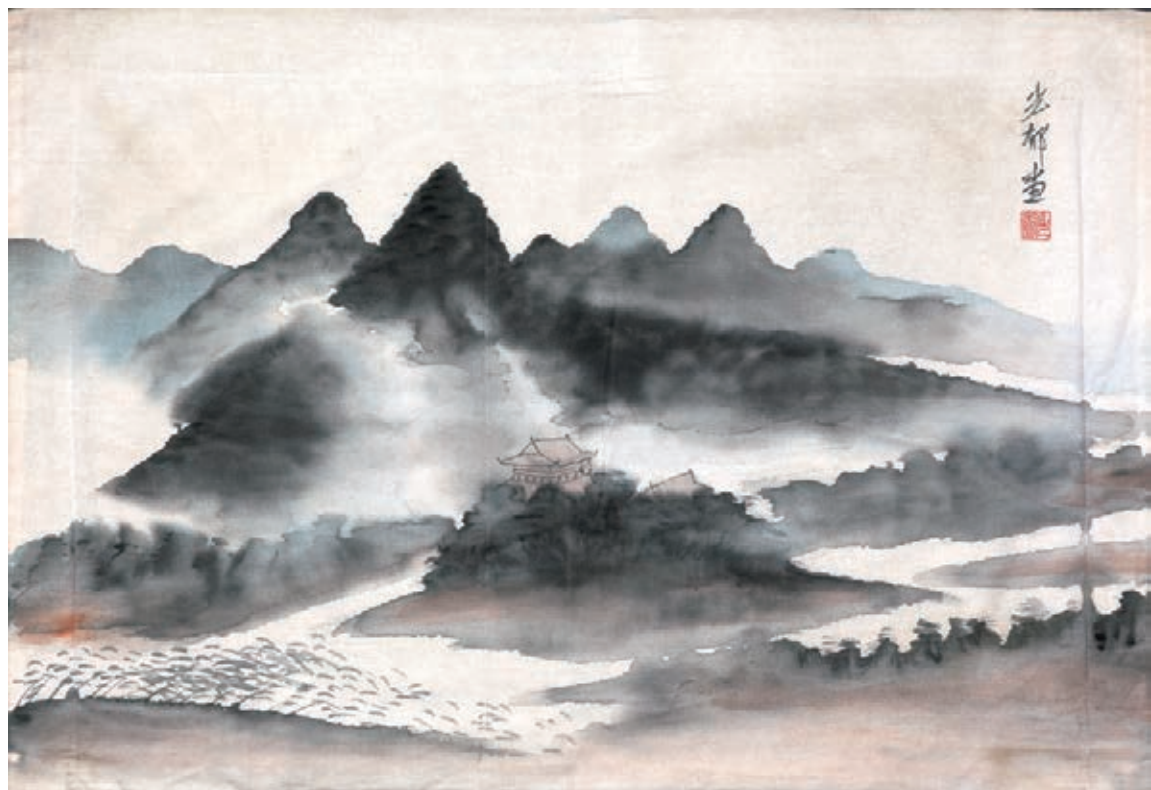
展出过程中,房
 梁上方滴下的清水
 在水墨冰砖中间
 形成如水滴石穿
 的洞孔。

墨水冰砖放置
 於临摹古典山水
 的床单上自然溶
 化,墨水与山水画
 融合形成半拍
 象形式。











When the Waters Recede, the Rocks Appear

水落石出

Performance installation artifact 行为装置遗留物





三

22

The Failure of Defense

失守

2007 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 60 x 90 cm x 9 * Denmark 丹麦

As with the performance installation *Borderline* (1997), or the performance *Incontinence* (2005), a central preoccupation in Dai Guangyu's practice is the relationship between self and society, citizen and State, and the condition of the contemporary Nation-State, State-engineered nationalism, and the nation-building project at the core of the People's Republic of China. His first iteration of this seminal performance work, *The Failure of Defense* (2007) was executed at the Louisiana Museum in Denmark, as part of the *Made In China* exhibition, and curated by Anders Kold, and Berenice Angremy.

This performance explored the artist's longstanding concern with the perils implicit in invidious ideological narratives of purity and exclusionary notions of national greatness. Standing at the center of a map of China, in which red stands for Communism and political-ideological purity, Guangyu methodically painted the map, and finally himself, black until all was obliterated. Black was a culturally specific symbol in China for the political taint of bad class family background. As in works such as *White is Not Necessarily Good* (2001), color takes on a semiotic weight and Guangyu plays with the relational connotations of various colors—especially red, black, and white—to explore political, social, and cultural questions, as well as historical. These ideological divisions thrust China into over a decade of chaos. Countless individuals' bodies, minds, livelihoods, and families (including Dai Guangyu's own) were wrecked, and the social fabric of the nation shredded by manipulated antagonisms and politically stoked hatred based on class differences. The mistrust, atomization and loss of solidarity that resulted, divided and conquered generations of Chinese citizens, producing political fatigue, and even outright terror at the very idea of politics. It was indeed a great failure of the nation to defend itself against these internally manufactured forces of destruction.

“失守”中红色地图代表1949年后社会主义体制治下的中国。以红色为政治权力象征，是当今政府精神图腾；黑色代表49年以远的传统文化和政治秩序。一个诞生几十年的政治实体与行诸两千年以上的文明较量，我们将失去什么不言自明。通过“失守”的视觉呈现，或将更加清晰。失守还是坚守？谁失守谁坚守？意味着截然不同的结果。

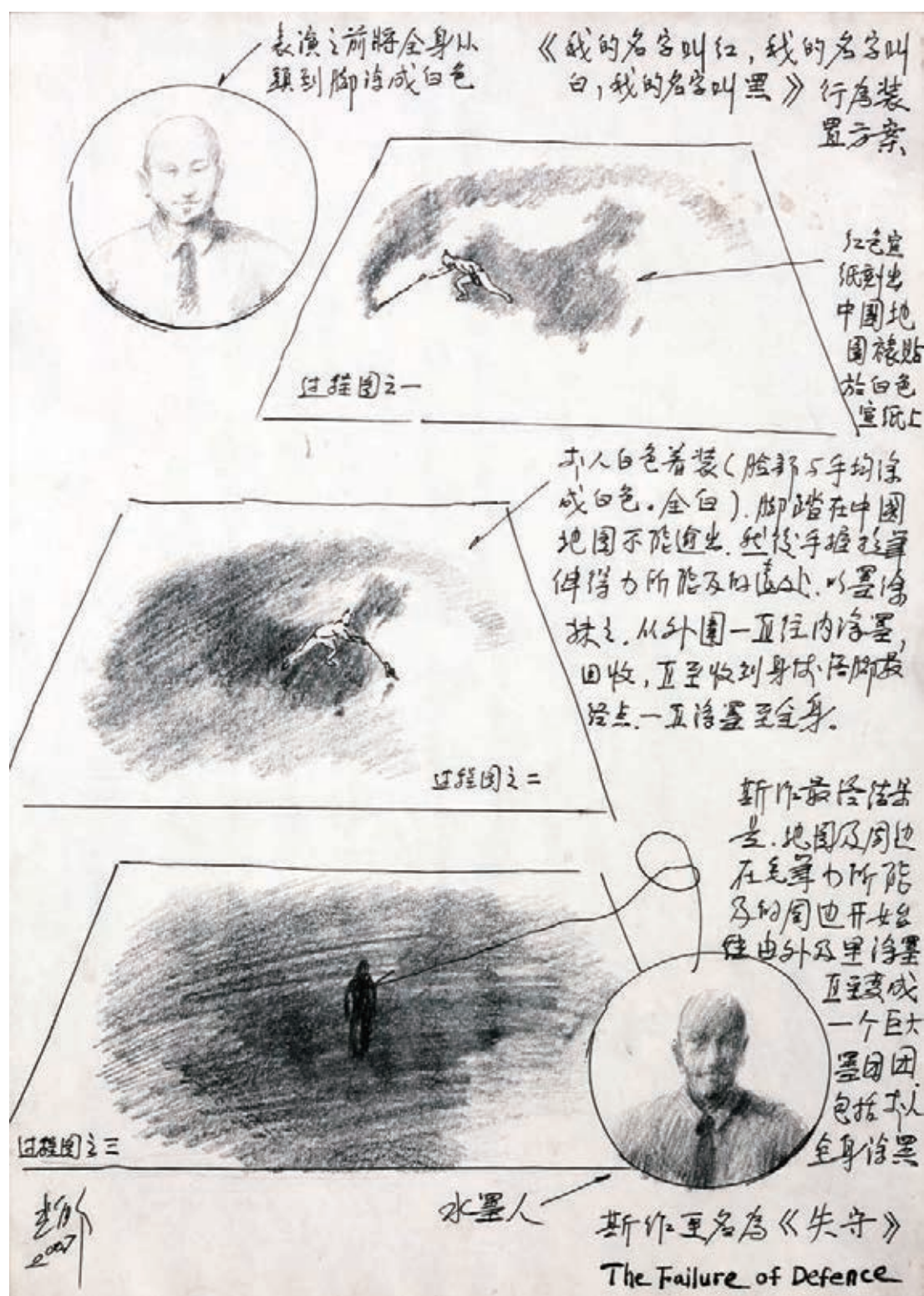
红色的中国地图和白色的人(戴光郁)隐退于墨水涂抹中，最终留下的，却是一幅单纯的抽象水墨图式。“失守”是个思想隐喻，所以是超现实的。但现实中无论政治、文化，还是其它领域，不遵从事物发展规律而强制性地改变，结果总是事与愿违适得真反，甚至是灾难性的。

22

The Failure of Defense

失守

Performance Sketch 行为方案

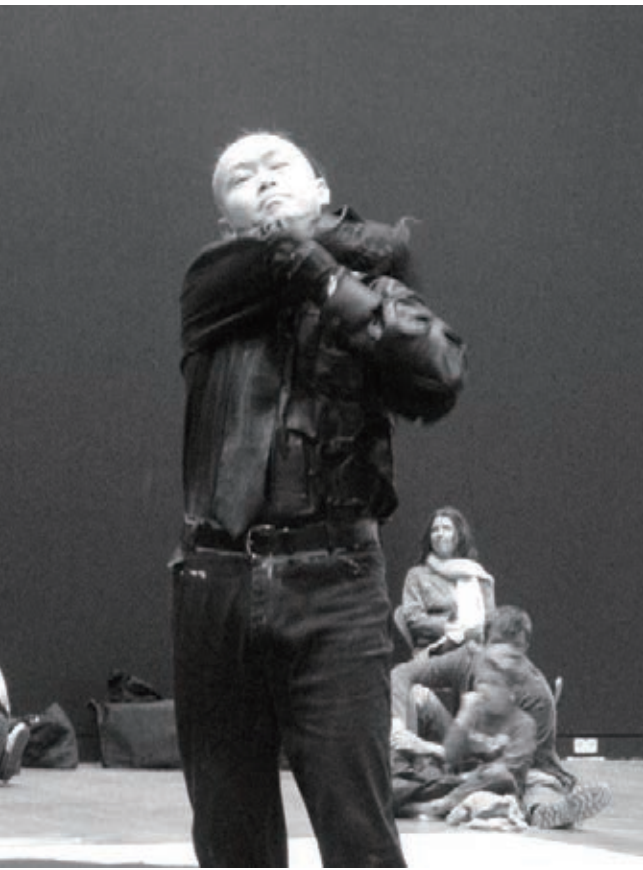


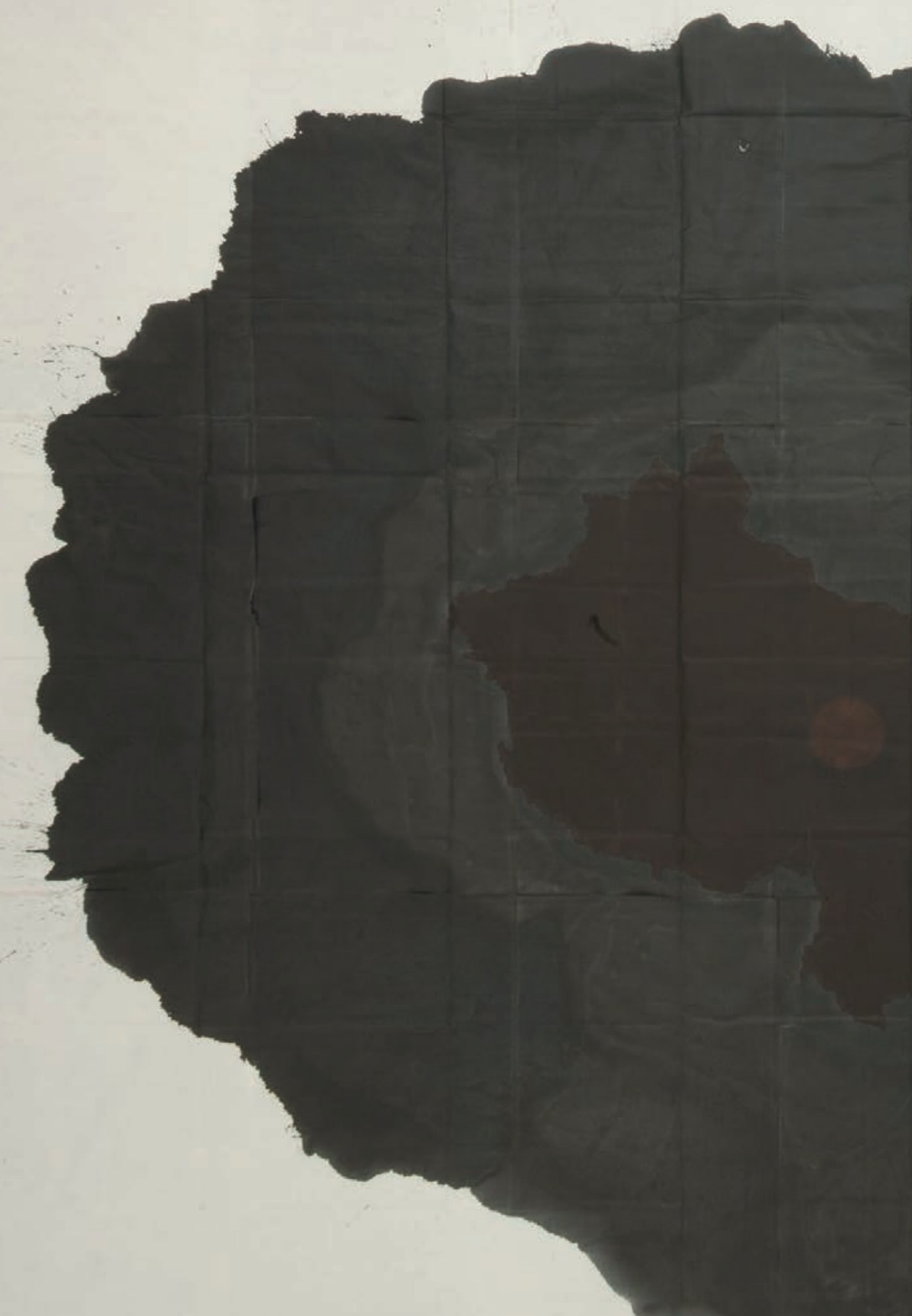






Photography: Juha Marttila











23

A Scenery I Once Knew So Well

风景旧曾谙

2008 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 160 x 240 cm * Shanghai 上海

A Scenery I Once Knew So Well (2008) derives its title from a line from Tang poet Bai Juyi (Tang, 727-846), in which the poet remarks how people come and go, generation after generation, but scenery remains the same as that which we have learned by heart. To make this work, Dai Guangyu invited visitors to the ifa gallery in Shanghai to join in a participatory performance painting. The work he selected, was the first leaf from Ming Dynasty painter and intellectual Dong Qichang's 1596 masterpiece album, *Eight Vistas of Yan and Wu*. The painting was broken into a grid of seven by seven sheets of *xuan* paper, and the basic contours of the painting were printed onto the paper as rough guidelines. Each participant was allowed to choose one of 49 squares and copy the portion of the painting they had chosen in their own way. Although the artist says that the number 49 is only coincidental with the founding year of the People's Republic, one cannot help but think of subconscious associations, given the way the piece is a subtle critique of how the "scenery" of our life and times (both natural, cultural, and political) has become barely recognizable in contrast with the "familiar scenes" from antiquity, the vital loss of which Dai Guangyu's works often lament. Audience participation was enthusiastic, and each participant brought their own unique sensibilities to the re-rendering of this historic painting. The significance of this work, then, becomes more than the ephemeral collective energy concentrated into the collaborative performance painting, and more than a vernacularization of traditional aesthetic language. Indeed, the work critiques and deconstructs contemporary notions of our relationships to the landscape itself, as well. If the "scenery" China "once knew so well" has profoundly, and perhaps irrevocably changed in its physical manifestations, how much more, then, have people's cultural relationships to the land, to nature, to notions of who we are in relation to the natural world, and how much more, too, has our shared cultural landscape, and inner psychological landscape changed as well. As with *Landscape, Ink, Ice* (2004), and *Landscape, Feng Shui* (2004/2005), *Long-Abandoned Water Standards* (1995/2017), and other works, Dai Guangyu questions our profoundly changed and still changing nature/culture relationships, and engages us *in-situ* with these questions through the performance.

这个作品由观众参与互动完成。每位参与者在自由选择的有编号方格中，按照片图像分格对印局部临摹。这是明代画家董其昌山水画名作“燕吴八景图”之一，将其分解为几十个局部交由参与者完成。观众热情参与，按个人理解临摹绘制的古画局部最终汇合，还原为一幅既是又不是，不是却还是的“燕吴八景图”。这样的结果，是要重新定义山水画美学概念？还是要告诉人们一个事实，昔日景物不再，文化风景依然？一如白居易（唐，727—846）“风景旧曾谙”诗句之叹，一代一代的人来了去了，风景依然如故。

A Scenery I Once Knew So Well

风景旧曾谙

Performance installation sketch 行为装置方案

从古典文学作品中，我们领略他感知伊流文化的博大人文景观，自然景观的壮丽之美。文化与自然之美，若“风景旧曾谙”？然！



展览结束后将以
墙上揭下卷裱。

1. 用宣纸装裱
待干后，在纸
上划出九宫
格。

2. 在九宫格内
临摹一幅古
典山水画。以
铅笔用单线
勾出，并编上号。

* 请一位礼仪
小姐瑞绘
画用具墨砚
两个男性助手
用方格压住局
部以协助参观者

3. 展出现场邀
请观众分格
临摹局部。每
位参与者只能接
自选编了部
临摹之且每人
只可临摹一个
空格并签上名

《风景旧曾谙》
现场艺术实施方案









24

Memorial

墨碑

2008 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 160 x 300 cm * Shanghai 上海

As with *Stains* (1989), *64 Whiplashes* (1989), and other works, the performance of *Memorial* (2008), as the title indicates, is another work through which Dai Guangyu attempts to process a recent historical trauma that occupies much of his practice. In this performance, the artist wears a white button-down dress shirt. He enters the space, where the words "picturesque scenery" are written on the floor in white flour—another material he frequently uses in his practice, in works such as *Feng Shui, Ink, Ice* (2004-2005). As with works including *Absorbing - Being Absorbed* (2001), ink drips from the ceiling onto the text written in flour below. Dai Guangyu tries to use his body to obstruct the flow of ink onto the text, but his attempts to stop this symbolic violence are futile. As the ink drops blur the text, he struggles, bent over the phrase, to use repair the disintegrating characters. As he works, the dripping ink stains his white shirt, until he is thoroughly soaked, and still he cannot save the word "beauty" (*mei* 美) from being destroyed. This process of damage and Sisyphean attempts to repair continues until two liters of ink have been expended. By now, the ink splattered flour he was using to repair the text has become increasingly useless. Finally, the act of repair is simply impossible, so Dai Guangyu scoops the inky flour into a mound and prepares his "memorial" ink stele. Mixing an additional 10 liters of ink, latex, toner, hemp fibers and cement into the disintegrated text, he kneads and shapes a rectangular block, onto which a date is emblazoned. Once dried and looking like a gravestone, the stele made of ink, flour, defeated language, wrecked beauty, and unspeakable memories, is set upon a mahogany base to serve as a reminder to never forget.

以面粉垒出的文字“风景美如画”被悬挂倒流的墨汁冲破。为修复文字，戴光郁以身体遮挡下流的墨汁，过程中，“美”字屡被墨水冲破又屡被修复，直至两公升墨汁滴完。此时，用以修复文字的面粉已经垒到难以再现笔划的厚度，表演者身着白衬衣也被墨汁浸染成黑色，墨的突显，使现场氛围洋溢一股别样精神气息。这是超越于一般意义的行为现场，接下来他要实现一个非凡计划，用这些面粉文字和墨制作完成一尊纪念碑。他刮掉文字，并将备好的十公升墨汁、乳胶、墨粉、麻筋和水泥混合到解体的文字中不断捏和，再将揉合的墨团放入特制“墨碑”模具夯实待干，然后取出，配上红木基座，作品完成。



Memorial

墨碑

Performance Photograph 行为图片



25

Stele

碑

2012 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 80 x 53.33 cm x 2 * Paris 巴黎

In Know White - Preserve Black, a work the title of which alludes to a line in Lao Zi's (Lao Tzu's) *Dao De Jing*, Dai Guangyu used flour to make out the words "know white, preserve black" on *xuan* paper, and on top of this placed several white porcelain bowls filled with ink. When the infusion bottle of clear water hanging from a beam above dripped into the bowl of ink, one drop at a time, the sound and rhythm of the dripping water was like a clock pendulum, meting out the passage of time. Water mixed with ink gradually filled the bowls until it overflowed, spilling out of the porcelain bowls. As it saturated the *xuan* paper, it formed different ink patterns each day, slowly billowing outward like inky smoke clouds. Because the text was written in white flour, its appearance gradually changed over the course of the exhibition. On the last day of the exhibition, Dai Guangyu quartered the pieces of ink-sodden *xuan* paper upon which the words in flour had been written. He smashed the porcelain bowls with a brick, and then put the scraped up, ink-soaked, flour-clotted *xuan* paper where each character had stood, and placed the mingled mess into a glass vessel, and then glued the four characters onto the bottle, like a label, and printed the time and place before sealing the vessel permanently. Just as artifacts of the past are a testament of that past to today's world, so too, perhaps are these new artifacts, created in the performance, a testimony to our future about our present moment. Just as the scrambled words contained in the bottle once had meaning, are they now rendered meaningless because of the fact that they have been rendered illegible? Does the trace of the original event not still nevertheless exist as a testament to a past that took place in spite of all erasures after the fact? This work offers its meaning up like an archeological puzzle for us to decipher.

“知白守黑”由两个部分组成，分两个阶段完成。第一部分为装置，在宣纸上用面粉垒出“知白守黑”四个字，再在其上自然分布盛满墨汁的白色瓷碗若干。当清水从房梁悬挂的输液瓶一滴一滴地滴入碗中，其滴水声响和节奏一如时钟钟摆，好像时间的算计。水混合着墨溢出瓷碗不断地往四周扩散，渗入宣纸后形成每天不同的水墨图式，就像云烟的流动。面粉文字由于厚度而不为墨水浸染，“知白守黑”更是黑白分明。但是它每天在改变。作品第二阶段是行为部分，即展览最后一天，将浸透墨水的宣纸和面粉垒出的文字按每个字为一个单元，切割为四等分，然后连同砸碎的碗，分别装入事先备好的瓶子中。最后，在瓶上分别贴上四个文字相对印的文字标注和时间地点记录，作永久封存。

Know White - Preserve Black

知白守黑

Performance installation sketch 行为装置方案

上宣纸上画出“知白守黑”四字，悬挂在空中的净水器下滴，流入盛满墨汁的青花碗中，墨水从碗里溢出，渗入宣纸。宣纸吸入墨水变黑，衬托出知白守黑四字。

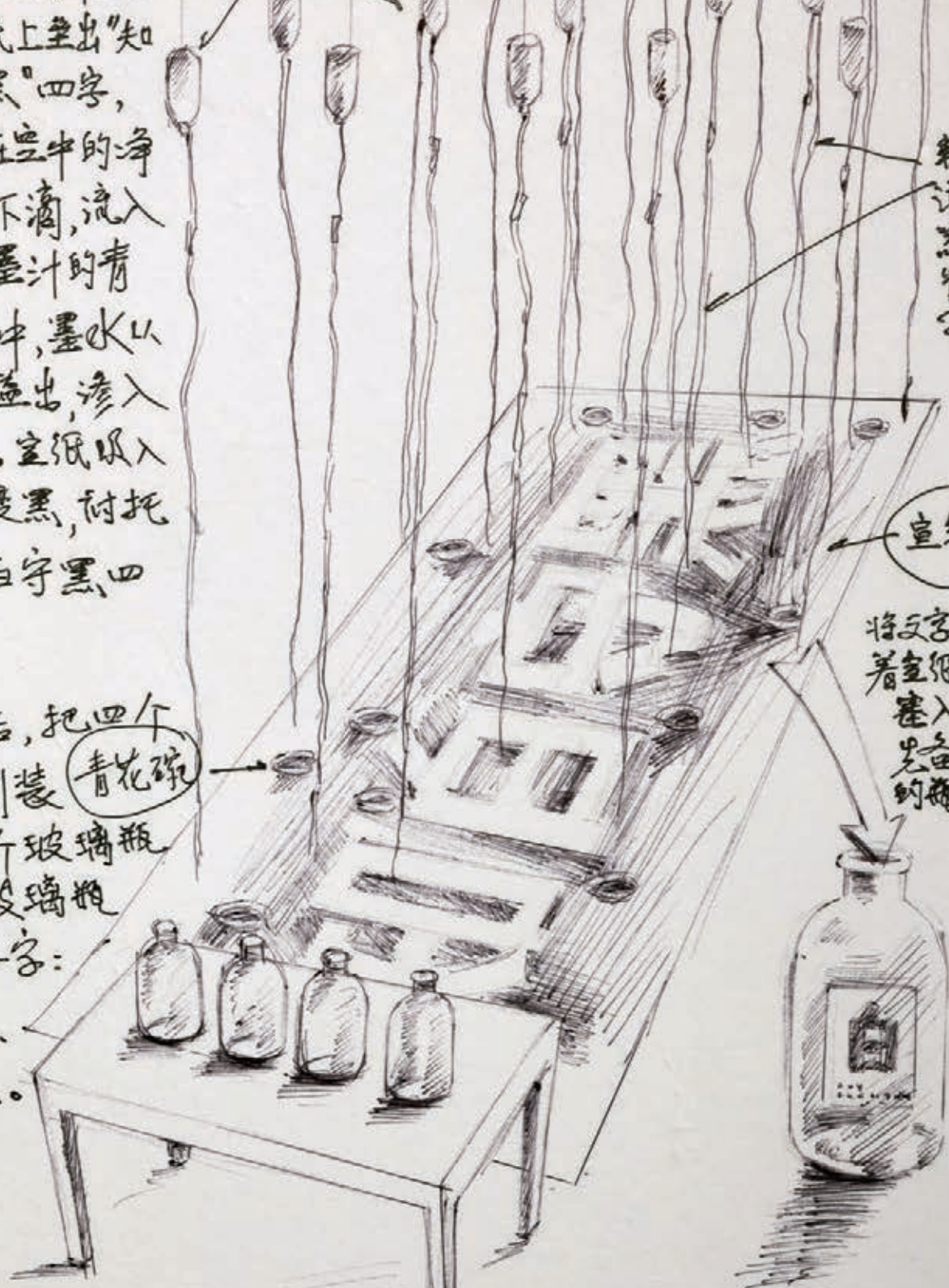
★然后，把四个字分别装进四个玻璃瓶，四个玻璃瓶各贴一字：知、白、守、黑。

四个玻璃瓶分别装入“知白守黑”四字，放置于条桌上

新派管子

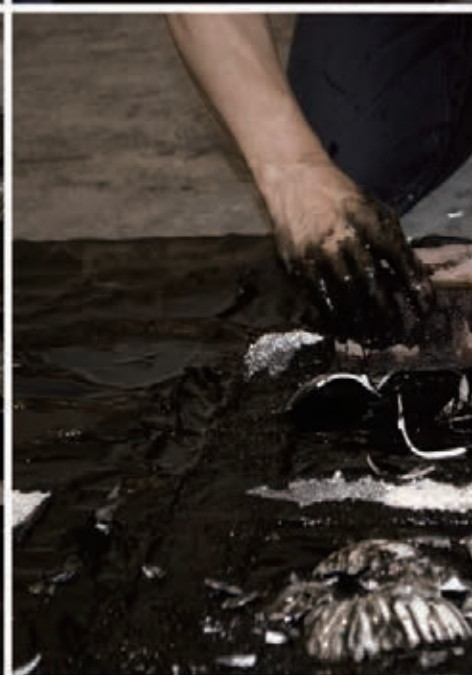
宣纸

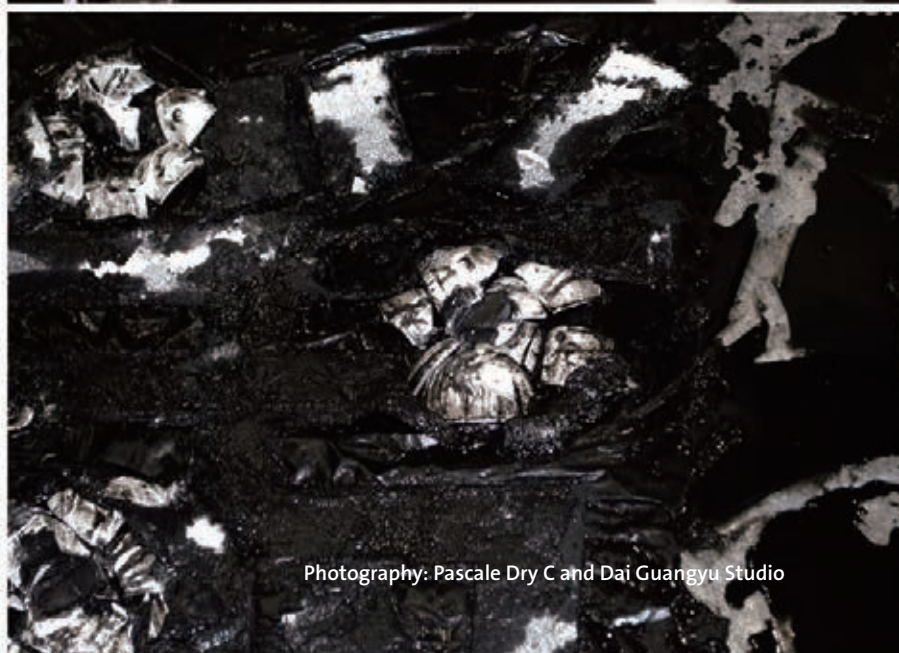
将文字合着宣纸塞入事先准备好的瓶子

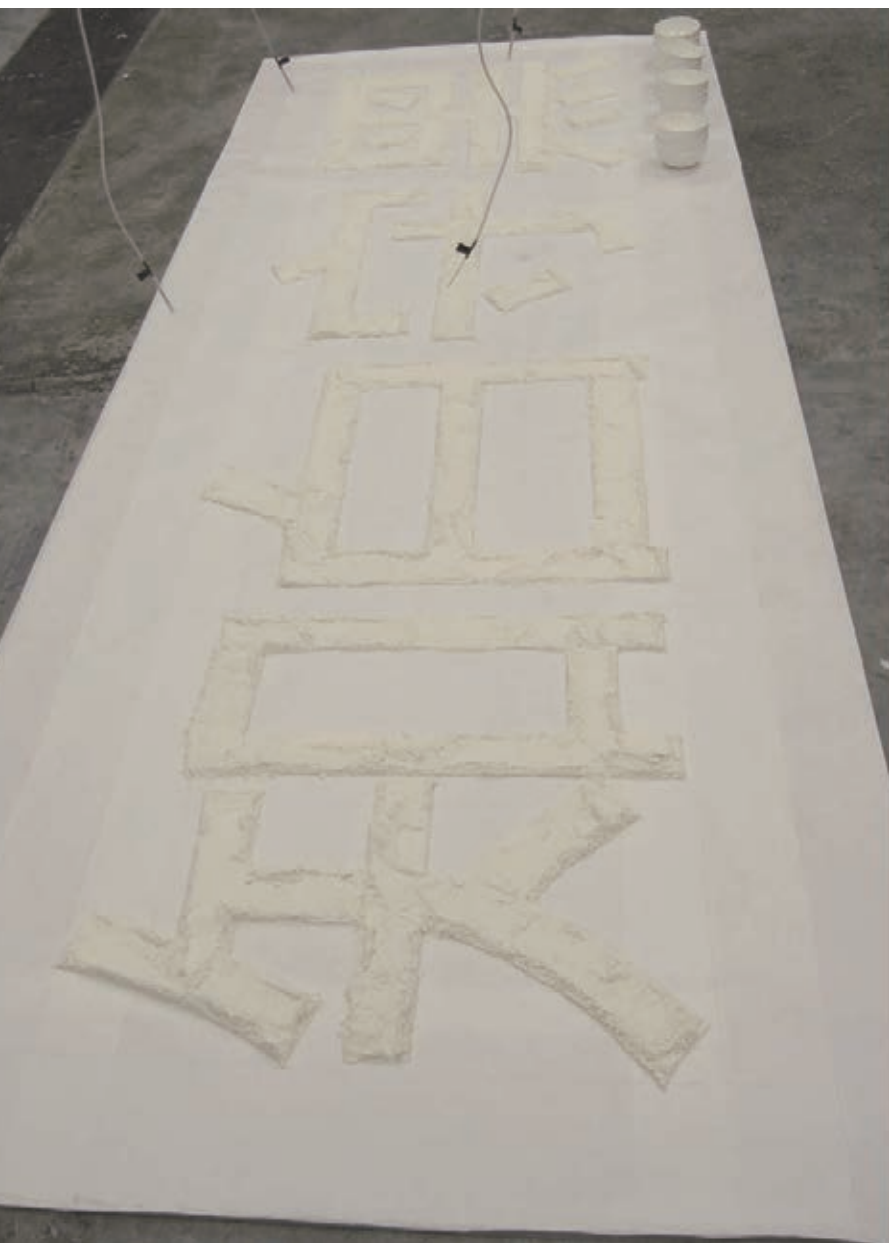


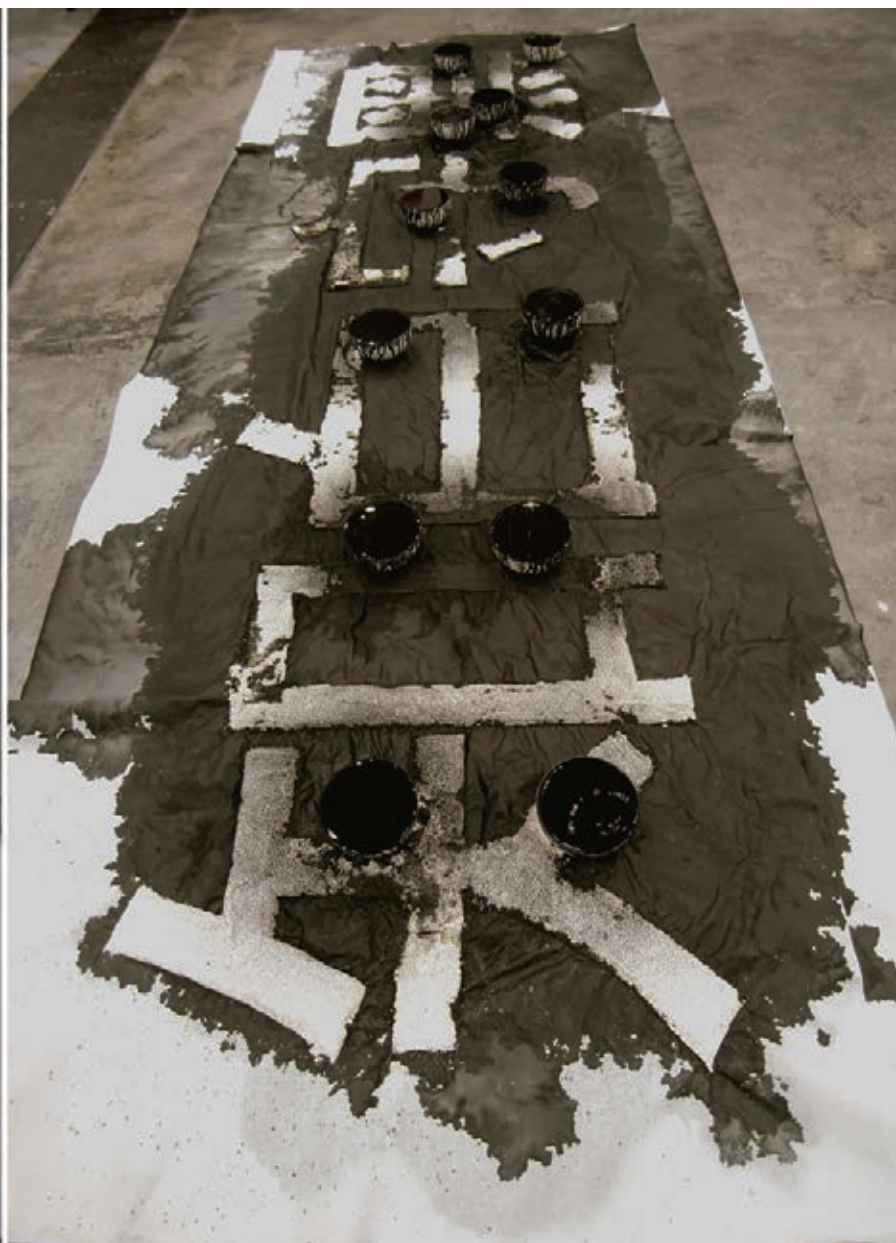
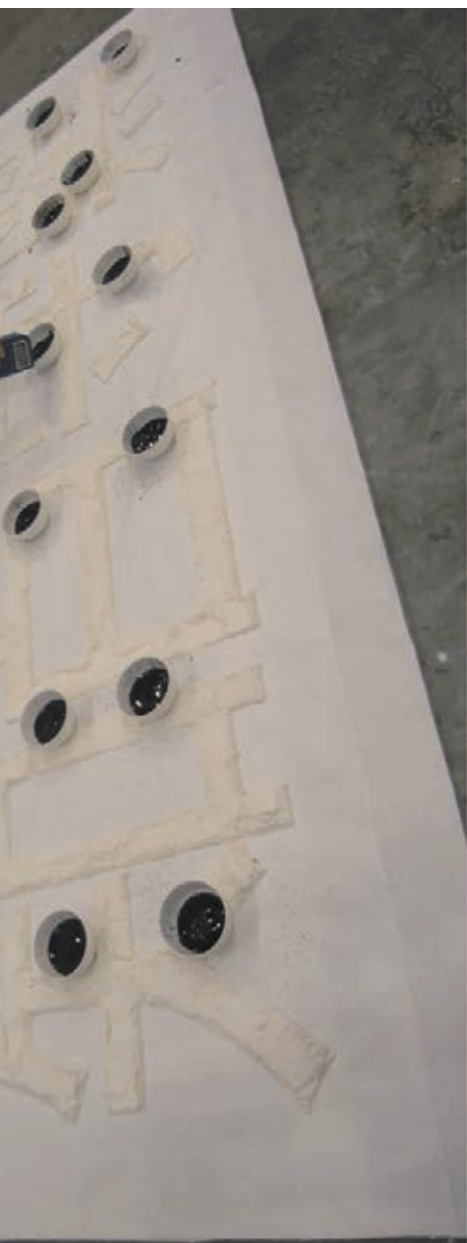
《知白守黑》参展方案、装置、行为 Dai Guangyu

★与此同时，将现场拍摄记录的照片冲洗出来后，张贴在玻璃瓶条桌后面墙上（全过程记录白墙为证）













26

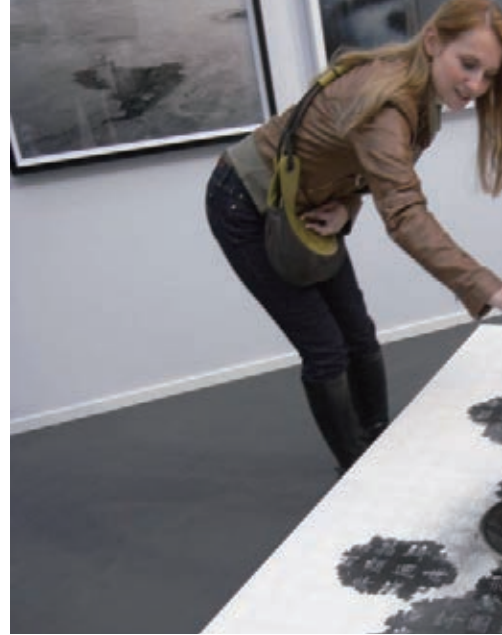
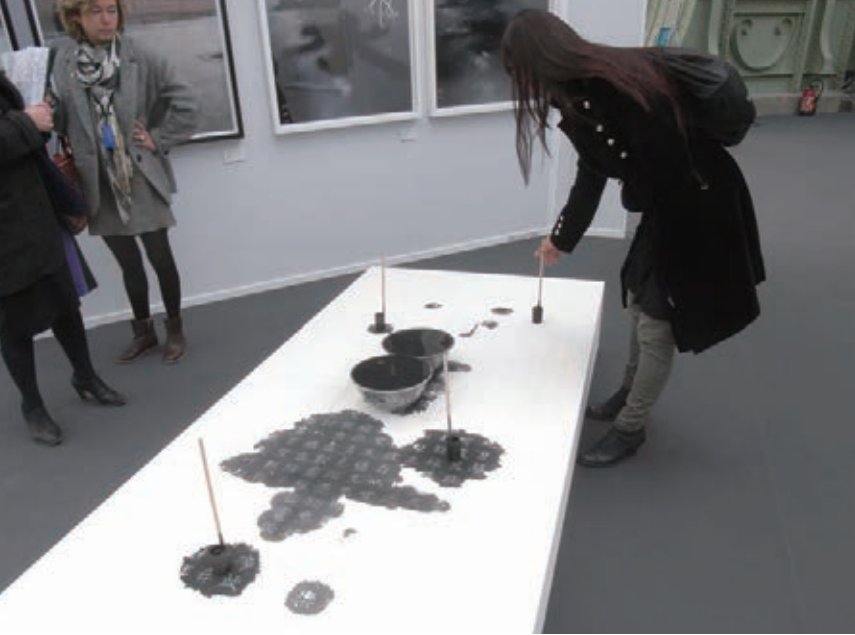
Stele

碑

2014 | Xuan paper, ink 宣紙、水墨 | 80 x 53.33 cm x 2 * Paris 巴黎

The performance installation *Stele* (2014) is another of Dai Guangyu's participatory performance interventions. Staged at the Grand Palais in Paris, and curated by Alexis Kouzemine-Karavaïeff, the work commences with a white rectangular plinth that appears to be blank. Atop the plinth are two Chinese blue and white bowls filled with ink. Water drips from the ceiling (as it does in many of his works, including the iconic 1997 performance installation *Borderline*) to activate the ink. As the water drips, the bowls slowly fill and then overflow at an almost imperceptible pace. Participants are invited to use the traditional wine ladles placed on the table to scoop ink from the bowls and place the filled ladles elsewhere on the table. Their actions stain the table with black ink, allowing the emergence of the text rendered on the white *xuan* paper covering the plinth. The calligraphic text was written in white glue so that it is invisible until brought into view by the audience's intervention. The text is a passage randomly selected from the *Thousand Character Classic*—a 1000-character poem, in which no character repeats, that has been taught to children since the sixth century, and was one of the three pillars of literacy inculcation known as the *San Bai Qian*—The Three, The Hundred, and The Thousand—which stood for the *San Zi Jing* 三字经, or Three Character Classic, the *Lao Bai Xing* 老百姓, or Hundred Family Surnames, and the *Qian Zi Wen* 千字文, or *Thousand Character Classic*. Dai Guangyu chose this text because of its status as a traditional vehicle of knowledge transmission from antiquity, as well as the ways it has been traditionally used to test calligraphic prowess in the past. Astronomy, geography, biology, culture, history and ethics are all referred to in this text. The performance seeks to spark awareness of our roles in culture-making and cultural transmission, and offer a performative experience that shows people the true meaning of culture through active participation (rather than passive rote learning), which allows valuable lessons of the past to emerge in the process of engagement.

《碑》是一件与观众互动完成的作品。属于装置、行为互动艺术。开始时，呈现在人们眼前的是一件整体白色的立方体平台，上面置放两个盛满墨汁的青花碗，清水从插入瓶子（悬挂于房梁）的输液管一滴一滴地滴进碗中——犹如时钟的钟摆，再慢慢溢出。与此同时，参与者用酒提子在青花碗里舀出墨水，任意放在台上——台子以宣纸装裱，宣纸上以白色胶液书写“千字文”。从酒提子裂纹漏出的墨水渗入宣纸，白色文字不吸水，最终为墨色衬托，犹如碑刻铭文拓片一般。“千字文”作为过去时代知识传习文本，是十分重要的古文献，天文、地理、文化演变、物种类别、道德操守历史知识等，一千字内包罗万象，是小学知识必读物，很普及。而今，各种伪论邪说占据文坛，普世性知识荡然无存。让人在参与中重新认识文化的真实涵义，正是《碑》力求达到地目标。也是一种精神昭示。







Small white label with text below the first photograph.

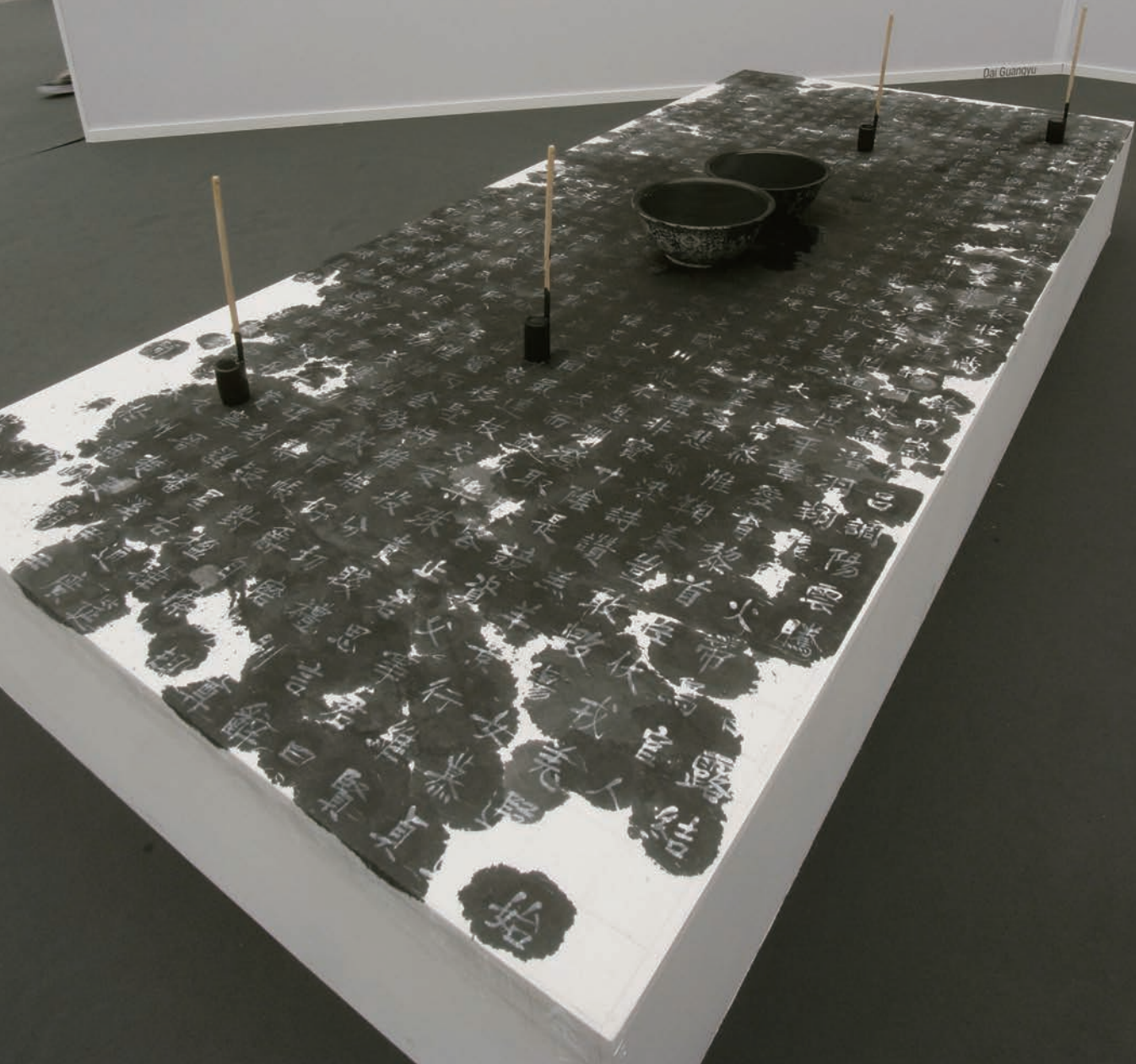
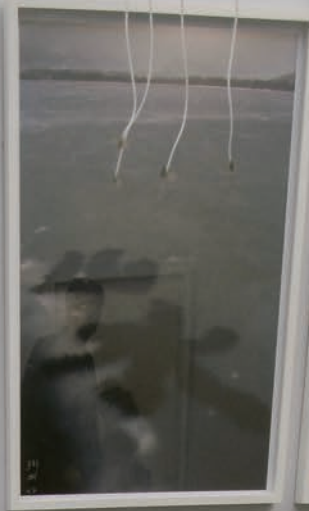
Small white label with text below the second photograph.

Small white label with text below the third photograph.

Small white label with text below the fourth photograph.

CHEN GUANGYU







此身嬰
可覆器
積德緣
仙政之
直孔
富
世
那



27

The Scroll of 'Lounging, High up by the Northern Window'

北窗高卧图

2014 | Photographs, medical tray, river water 照片、医用托盘、河水
80 x 53.33 cm x 3 * Dresden 德累斯顿

Curated by Andrea Hilger and Nadine Bors, the performance installation, entitled *The Scroll of 'Lounging, High up by the Northern Window'* (2014), took place at OSTRALE'014 Ostragehege, Dresden, Germany. In this work Dai Guangyu constructed the installation space of the performance as a "secret chamber" designed to evoke a sense of comfortable seclusion, and spiritual, poetic resolve. The environment was fitting for a writer—quiet, tranquil, self-sufficient, and refusing to engage in clamor of the dominant society. On the wall above the window, the artist placed portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao, and covered them and the adjacent windows with translucent sheets of *xuan* paper. On these *xuan* paper-covered walls he drew scenes from classical landscape paintings, creating an environment suitable for an esteemed literatus. In this setting, Dai Guangyu reads the German constitution, paints it white, and meditates on the window. In spite of the intimate character of this peaceful atmosphere he has created, the portraits of ideological and political leaders remain visible beneath the covering of *xuan* paper, and their images linger and disturb the tranquility of the scene. For contemporary literati and public intellectuals to attain the independence needed for innovative creative and work, they need safe and private spaces for creation and contemplation, yet the landscape of our intellectual and creative lives is never truly free of ideology or power, and this is one of the underlying contradictions with which we are forced to contend.

利用展场空间特殊结构，将现场环境改造成幽闭，却充满诗意；灵性，且还固执不阿的密室。这是一个静谧、不受打扰；独立、拒绝喧嚣的自足世界——正如作者一贯坚持的那样。他把宣传用品马、恩、列、斯、毛标准头像裱贴于窗户上方墙头，再以宣纸覆盖之——包括窗户。并在宣纸装裱的墙面画出古典山水，营造一种文人自适的遁居环境。然后，他坐在宣纸装裱的窗前冥想，安闲自得地涂白一本书——德国宪法。在这样一个安祥空间里，尽管充满私密性质，却总是透出一丝肃杀气，令人不安。墙面宣纸下隐约可见的领袖像，像萦绕不去的魔咒，破坏了上述祈愿。密室如果也没安全感，犹如禁室，人性光芒必会暗淡。难道，那非人性的、无所不在的操控力量就像瘟神一样无法摆脱？总之，《北窗高卧》的叙事情景，是当下正发生着的现实景观，矛盾重重，违逆人性，却无往不胜。人该怎样做？

《北窗高卧图》装置方案

作品实施大致情况：借展墙那一扇窗户，在窗下安放一张书桌，一把椅子以营造一个读书环境。再以中国书画装裱方式用宣纸将其全部覆盖，包括窗户（宣纸覆盖的墙面一直延伸至拐角那堵垂直布墙）。然后，我在裱上宣纸的墙上临摹古典山水画。这一切完成之后，人们会发现墙面顶端（有窗那面墙）隐约可见一排马、恩、列、斯、毛的肖像。原来，宣纸覆盖前，墙面已事先贴有这几个在中国跟之不去的、幽灵般的政治圣人图片。

“北窗高卧”这句成语，说隐居的高人悠闲自得地在密室自由的思考。这样的情景在中国古典绘画中经常见到。这是画家安身立命的基本态度，是知识分子心向往之的生存准则和思想境界。而在当今世界，庸俗的社会学和严酷的政治环境，使这一切似乎成一场遥远的梦……是的，我想假借一个梦的场景来追还逝世的人文情怀；我也想以此来表达对古代先贤的敬意。

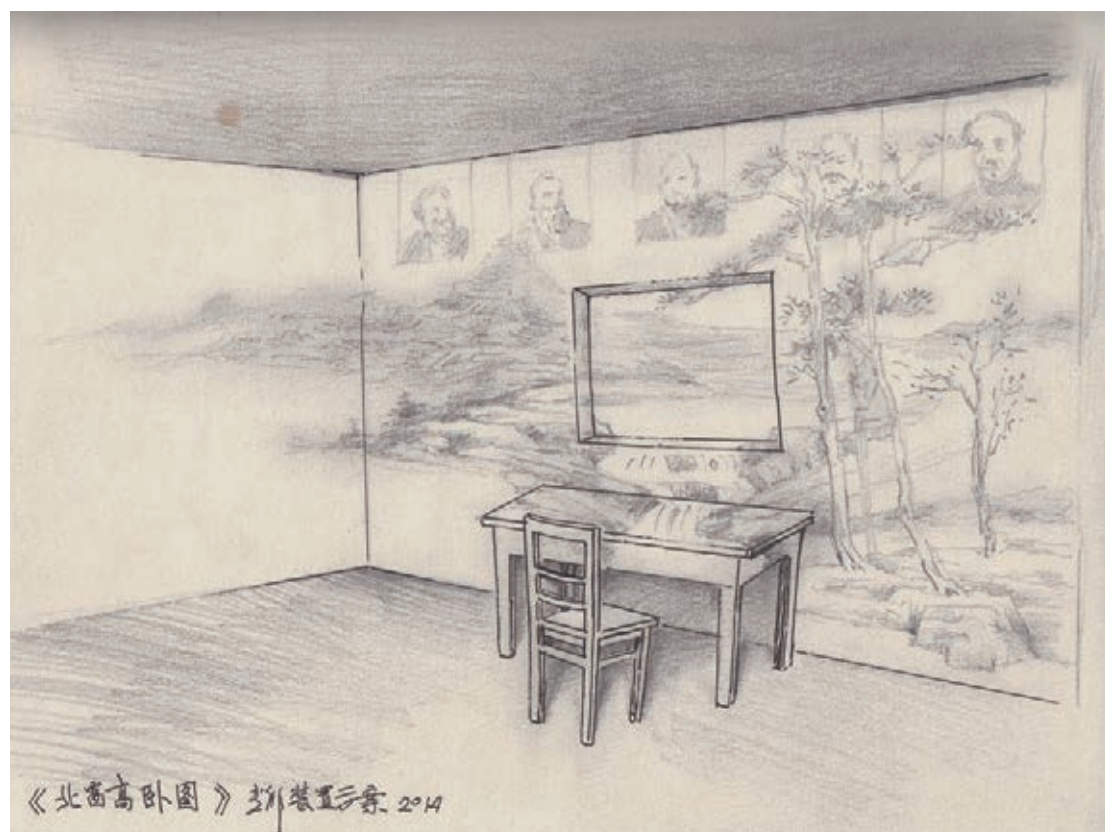
所以，引用这句成语再加上“图”字（图字作为后缀词，在传统文人画家作品命名中常见），更具古意。

这是对现实的思想景观，它的呈现方式充满诗意；这是起码的个人愿望，虽然它如拟梦境。

The Scroll of 'Lounging, High up by the Northern Window'

北窗高卧图

Performance installation sketch 行为装置方案







The Scroll of 'Lounging, High up by the Northern Window'

北窗高卧图

Performance Photograph 行为图片

原上一條
水如點
覺空無
水作遠
以不可
故衣生
於子野
題後
此畫山
畫畫時
亦在眼
到與樹
空遠似
欲湖古
何處不
來應生
畫後
何處不
何處不



28

Long-Abandoned Water Standards – Beijing

搁置已久的水指标——北京

2017 | Photographs, medical tray, river water 照片、医用托盘、河水

64 x 64 cm * Beijing 北京

Long-Abandoned Water Standards – Beijing (2017) offers a site specific, local instantiation of this classic 1995 work. In this work, Dai Guangyu collected water samples from a canal in Beijing and used the polluted water to "develop" photographs of volunteers. He placed the black and white portraits of the participants into metal medical trays, like the ones used in 1995, and then let the images soak in the local water. Each day the images successively degraded over the course of the exhibition, as the chemicals in the water ate away at the photographs and distorting the color, and performatively illustrating the damage to our bodies wrought by water pollution. Dai Guangyu stresses that although 22 years have passed since the first iteration of this performance in Chengdu, the ecological situation has only worsened.

这是戴光郁 1995 年“水的保卫者”艺术活动（成都）展出作品《搁置已久的水指标》再度实施现场。浸泡图片的河水取自北京，展场在北京，所以命名之后加标注“北京 2017”意在强调，这是北京版“水指标”生态报告。时空变了，人员变了（提供肖像图片参与者），而河水腐蚀照片的结果没变。这便是他以通俗易懂、简洁明瞭艺术形式来提示的问题，二十二年的时间跨度，人们的生存环境（环境污染）依然未见好转，难道这还不足以唤醒人们的环境保护意识？











29

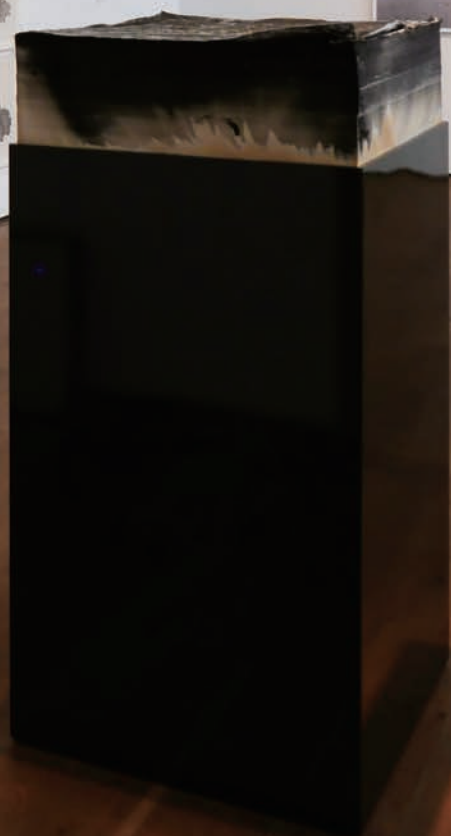
The Eye of Heaven's Justice

天罚之眼

2017 | Frozen ink, xuan paper 冰墨, 宣纸 | 64 x 64 cm * Beijing 北京

The performance installation, *The Eye of Heaven's Justice* (2017) is a work that speaks to the "truthiness" of the trace. It was made for the *Making Traces* exhibition, in dialogue with the first ink-ice work done by Dai Guangyu back in 1989, *Marks of Corrosion*. To make the work, he took 2053 sheets of *xuan* paper, and numbered them into two separately sequenced stacks, which were placed on top of the first stack. The two stacks of numbered sheets were set upon a black plinth and atop these a huge block of frozen black ink of the same dimensions (64cm square). Over time, the ink-ice began to melt and the ink soaked into the stacks of *xuan* paper. It penetrated the paper and obscured the numbers stamped below. As with so many of Dai Guangyu's works, such as *Stains* (1989), *Leaving Traces* (1997), *Diary* (1998), and others, this work, too, raises epistemological questions about knowledge, memory, visibility, the nature of the trace as a form of witness. Even traces that have been obliterated, or erased, still bear witness to the truth of the events that indexically marked them. The fact that a mark has not been seen does mean it does not exist. Historical events can be erased from public discourse, but their facticity and reality nevertheless remains. Their traces, visible or rendered invisible, are nevertheless indices of truth.

将64cm见方的水墨冰砖置放于二千零五十三张一叠的宣纸上（也是64cm见方），任其自然溶化。宣纸分成两组从中心位置印上数字依次编号，下面一组一千九百八十九张从数字1印到1989，第二组亦然。当宣纸摞在一起放上冰墨，溶化的墨水就不停地往下渗透并覆盖着数字。过程中，外观上是见不着隐藏在中心位置的数字和墨水下浸印痕的。但是，内部运行轨迹无法识辩，并不表明发生过的事实因为看不见就不存在，这是“天罚之眼”所要揭示的。扼要地说，这里所触及的不仅仅是个常识性问题，更是关于隐与显、真相谎言揭示的哲理问题。不用分析，只需观察，该作意涵一目了然。











30

And Thus is This Land

如此江山

2017 | Ink, xuan paper 纸本水墨 | 780 x 480 cm * Beijing 北京

For this site-specific participatory performance of his new major work, *And Thus is This Land*, taking place during the opening of *Making Traces*, Dai Guangyu selected the iconic painting, *This Land So Rich in Beauty*, as the object of a deconstructive remaking to scale with the epic original.

An iconic work depicting the national greatness and unity of China, as envisioned by Chairman Mao, *This Land So Rich in Beauty* is a vivid example of the political micromanagement of artistic production during the post-revolutionary era. Fu Baoshi, and Guan Shanyue were selected to collaboratively paint the ink-on-paper mural that hangs in the Great Hall of the People. Officials decided that painting was to be based on the vision of the Chinese nation promulgated in Mao's poem, "Ode to Snow." From the geographically hybrid landscape, to the size of the red sun, and even the scale of the painting itself, officials dictated most of the important elements of the painting to the artists who executed the work. In his poem, Mao praises the geographical diversity and greatness of China—so "rich in beauty," both in terms of its natural splendor and its epic historical achievements, such as the Great Wall. He dismisses the legacies of China's so-called great leaders past, from Emperor Qin Shihuang to Genghis Khan, as all-too-lacking, and ends the poem with the lines: "All are past and gone! / For truly great men / Look to this age alone."

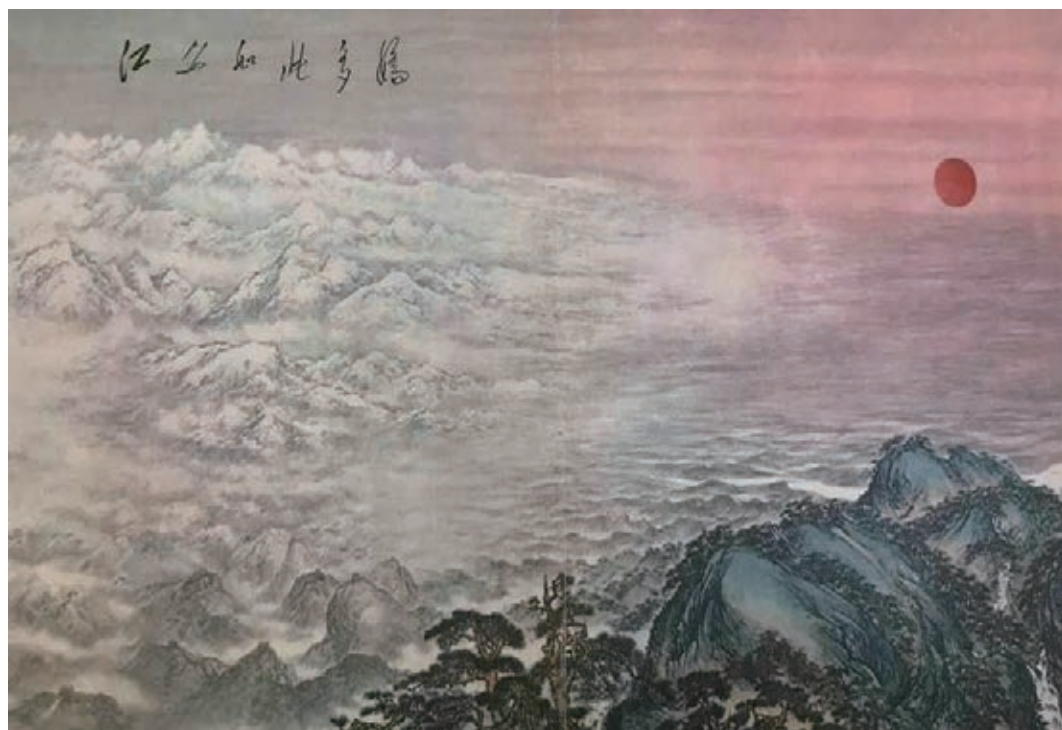
In Dai Guangyu's participatory performance, in the same spirit as *A Scenery I Once Knew So Well* (2008), 104 volunteers chose selections from a rectilinear

grid composed of numbered segments of the painting to repaint. The collective act of repainting this heavily charged artwork offered a deeply symbolic and simultaneously performative intervention that restaged and reconfigured the meaning of the original work through the act of remaking it. If the original work, *This Land So Rich in Beauty* served to affirm a historically specific vision of the Chinese nation, and imply the rightful relationship between the leader and the people, *And Thus is this Land* offers an response that leaves the question of the character of the nation wide open.

And how is this land, actually?

The performance, then, is itself a kind of answer to the question that it poses, but it is an answer that only comes through the act of re-making. Through participation in this act of re-making, participants will offer answers to these questions—not representational answers that depict a different nation, but performative answers that offer different ways in which we are, and thus the nation is, and can be made to be. Through either tacit or active support, passive quiescence and complicity, or even outright refusal of the status quo rules of the game that determined historically how the nation was to be represented, (and by extension, what the character of that represented nation might actually be), participants make traces together that index the stances they take, and serve to performatively and symbolically answer the most fundamental of questions that any nation must constantly ask of itself:

Who are we? How are we to live together? Under what terms? By what rules of the game? Who decides what those rules are and who has a right to participate in their making? When is refusal a form of participation? When is participation a form of refusal? Who are the legitimate players in this game and who decides what their acceptable range of roles can be? Who decides what counts as the good, the true, the beautiful, and the just?



Fu Baoshi and Guan Shanyue, *This Land So Rich in Beauty*, 1959 ink and color on paper, commissioned to hang in the Great Hall of the People, Tiananmen Square, Beijing, 1959.

“江山如此多娇”作为特殊历史时期、特定政治环境下的产物，它既是一件艺术品，又是图解政治的工具。从它诞生之日起，林林总总的评论重点，便落脚在意识形态解析思路上。现随意抽取一条网上评论，兹引于下：

“江山如此多娇”是1959年国画大师傅抱石、关山月为新建人民大会堂合作的巨幅山水画。画面上旭日东升，江山壮丽，表现出新中国的勃勃生机。近景的青绿山水，代表祖国的南方；远景的冰天雪地代表祖国的北方，中间以长城、黄河贯穿，使整幅画面连贯起来，成为一个整体，象征我们伟大祖国的团结统一、繁荣昌盛。毛泽东主席看了此画十分满意，欣然挥毫题上“江山如此多娇”六个具有十七帖体又是毛泽东自己风格的行草大字。

此图取自毛泽东《沁园春》词意，把代表性的四季山水集中、浓缩到一起，运用革命现实主义和浪漫主义相融合的创作手法，表现了祖国河山的雄奇壮美……具有强烈的民族风格和时代感。这张画完成于建国十周年前夕，其不寻常的意义还在于，毛泽东主席亲自在画上题字，而且是唯一的一幅，其价值更是无法估量。

一幅山水画要承载那么多政治含义，容纳那么多思想内容，其艺术含量究竟怎样可想而知。据说傅、关二人接到这个政治任务心理压力很大，尤其是当朝国家领导人亲自督阵（政府总理周恩来亲自过问），压力不可谓不大。一方面，御用文人烂熟于胸的邀宠心思，唯恐歌功颂德答卷主子不满意，战战兢兢，百般奉迎；另一方面，正值三年大饥荒年代“朱门酒肉臭，路有冻死骨”，饿殍遍野的景象却在御用文人“繁荣昌盛”红色山水粉饰下被掩盖。即便只论艺术，也正是这幅革命现实主义加浪漫主义红色山水画开头，以后的山水画创作方向被定了基调。故而所有山水画家在心理压力巨大的创作生涯中浪费才情，直至“文革”结束。

戴光郁选择这幅画为解构对象，对历史叙事结构进行颠覆性拆解；对当下强权宰治下人文生态环境颓靡之势发声，具有特别的批判意义。由104位参与者加入艺术家的创作计划中，将分割为104块的原图按自己的风格理解重绘，再重新组合。这时，人们眼前的“江山如此多娇”却是另一番景象。这是最真实的江山图谱，故而戴光郁将其命名为：如此江山。













31

The Failure of Defense—America

失守——美国

2017 | Ink on paper 纸本水墨 | 144 x 365 cm * New York 纽约

Dai Guangyu's first iteration of his seminal work, *The Failure of Defense* (Denmark, 2007), explored the artist's longstanding concern with the perils implicit in invidious ideological narratives of purity and exclusionary notions of national greatness. In the site-specific 2017 installment of work in this series, Dai Guangyu turns his gaze toward homologous, albeit locally and historically specific, forces that threaten the nation in the contemporary American context.

A keen student of history and politics, Dai Guangyu finds alarming parallels between the political extremism of the American right and the rise of "Alt-Fight" fascism, and the totalitarian excesses that nearly destroyed China during the Cultural Revolution—the scapegoating and persecuting Othered members of the polity, invidious narratives of purity, and the use of intimidation and violence to subjugate Othered targets, etc.

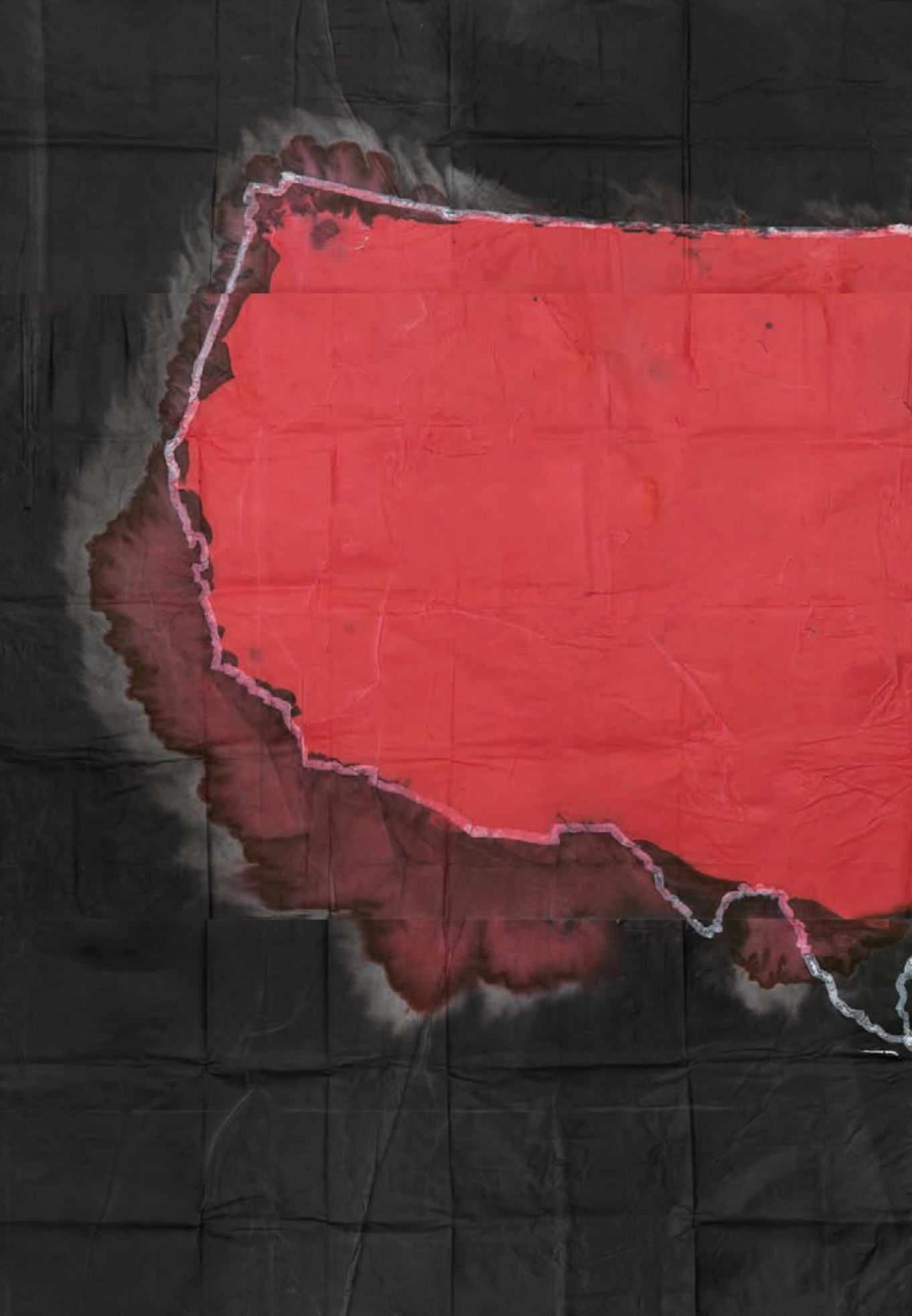
In the 2007 version of the performance, red stood for political and ideological purity in the context of Cultural Revolutionary Era China, black symbolized in China for the inherited political taint of bad class family background, and the map in the performance was that of Red China.

In this current iteration of *The Failure of Defense—America 2017*, curated by Maya Kóvskaya for Asia Contemporary Art Week, the color scheme remains Dai Guangyu's familiar palette of black, red and white, but the map of China is replaced by a map of America, and the uses of black, white and red are culturally and historically specific as well. As the performance unfolds, the artist, dressed in a white dress shirt and khaki slacks—the new coded attire of the so-called Alt-Right and White Supremacists. His faced painted white, Dai Guangyu begins to paint the seemingly blank *xuan* paper 'canvas' (covering the stage) with black ink. As he paints, the outlines of the white map of the United States begin to emerge against the black ground and vermillion ink seeps from his clothing, leaking out onto the map, and staining it with splatters of red. As the map was revealed to be that of America, some members of the audience were witnessed weeping, while Guangyu worked in grim silence.

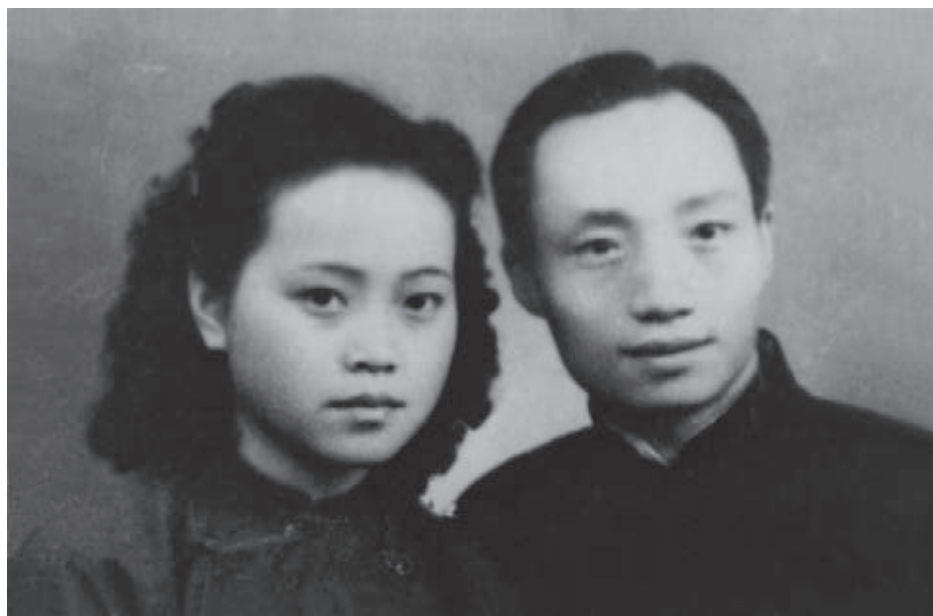
表演者身着典型的美国中产阶级白人至上主义者偏爱的T恤衫和米色长裤，手与脸部用戏剧白色涂白，至使整个身体在白色基调中呈现行为姿态。他手握粉刷滚筒蘸合着墨汁从一张布满舞台的白纸（宣纸）上开始涂抹，墨色涂抹由外向内，渐渐地型塑出一白色美国地图图形。当白色地图成形，黑色仍在蔓延时，表演者足下却泛起一阵阵红色。随着时间推移，红色逐渐扩展，几呼蔓延美国地图全境。当墨水涂满白纸——由白转黑；红色浸满地图——由白变红，行为戛然而止。











Dai Guangyu's parents in the 1940s, while his father was employed at the Sichuan Provincial Library.

BIOGRAPHICAL TIMELINE

1955

On November 28th, Dai Guangyu was born, the fourth child (among eventually seven children), at Luogongci temple in Chengdu, then used as dormitory for expert staff of the Sichuan Provincial Library and their families. In accordance with traditional customs, his mother Sun Jiahui had left her teaching post at a primary school to manage the household and assist her husband's career. Thus she was Dai's first teacher.

Dai's family had a very strong intellectual background. His father Dai Zhili was a historian of modern China and a highly esteemed student of Qian Mu, a major figure in sinology. Hired by the Institute for Sinological Research at Qilu University at 25 (1941), Dai Zhili's field of research was pre-Qin thought. By 1943, having won the acclaim of Qian Mu for his dedication and learning, Dai Zhili was promoted on his recommendation to the management staff of the Sichuan Provincial Library to work as assistant to Director Meng Wentong, a major scholar of the Chinese classics. By 1947, Dai Zhili had become professor at the Zunjing Sinological Institute founded by Meng.

When Dai Guangyu was born, his father was still employed by the Sichuan Provincial Library.

1956

In April, Dai Guangyu's father was recruited by the renowned historian and philologist Xu Zhongshu to conduct research at the History Department of Sichuan University. With his parents, Dai moved into the Fourteenth Family Dormitory there.

1957

When Dai Guangyu was a little over one year old, the Anti-Rightist Movement began. His father, a man of striking integrity and character, was fortunate to avoid



Dai Guangyu as an infant (first from left). Sichuan University Campus, 1957.

persecution due to a lack of "evidence", having only recently been employed at the university.

1958

Dai Guangyu's father was charged as a criminal for voicing critical opinions, but the quota for rightists had been exceeded. He was thus branded instead a "reactionary to be treated as [an example of] internal conflict among the people." This began decades of political persecution of Dai Guangyu's family, an experience that shaped his thought and values.

1959

The Dai family moved into a newly-built university dormitory called Zhenglou.

1962

Before his formal schooling, Dai Guangyu's father made him study calligraphy in the manner of the traditional private academy. Dai Guangyu tried calligraphy with a brush for the first time.

1963

Dai Guangyu was enrolled in the Sichuan University-affiliated Wangjianglou Elementary School in Chengdu.

1965

Failing academically, Dai Guangyu distinguished himself in children's painting contests. His painting of Asian, African, and Latin American children embracing peace (a theme chosen by his teacher) was submitted to Dongcheng District Children's Palace and awarded a prize. Afterwards, the painting was exhibited in the gymnasium of his school.



Dai Guangyu at the age of innocence, photographed with his siblings in 1962.

1966

The Cultural Revolution started, halting all classes in universities and secondary schools. Public criticism sessions and revolutionary tours became prevalent across the country. All normal industrial, procuratorate, legal, political, educational, and commercial activities were suspended and replaced by armed fights, public destruction of the "Four Olds," street robberies, and ransacking of homes. Charged as a "counter-revolutionary historian" and a "reactionary academic authority," Dai Guangyu's father was put under struggle sessions, forced to wear "tall hats" and paraded publicly. He was even slandered as a "Taiwanese spy" (his teacher Qian Mu had encouraged him to leave for Hong Kong and Taiwan with him in 1949). Dai Guangyu's home was ransacked twice that year. His father's research papers were confiscated, as was the family's collection of calligraphy and paintings. Other possessions were freely confiscated or destroyed, causing physical and financial ruin. Afterwards, the doors and windows of the Dai home were entirely covered with big-character posters. The Dai family's seven children were all placed under house arrest by the university.

During the second half of the year, the situation became even worse. Dai Guangyu's father could not stand the humiliation and escaped. Seeing his father's arrest warrant around campus, Dai Guangyu was scared and worried. His father's location was betrayed by a neighbour, and he was promptly arrested. He was taken to a private prison on the school campus.

The Cultural Revolution spread to Wangjianglou Primary School. The principal Sheng Huili was subjected to struggle sessions. Classes were suspended.

1967

Under house arrest and extremely bored, Dai Guangyu and his brother Dai Guangwen often escaped their dormitory when it was quiet for the thrill of transgression, but they were often discovered by older children, who chased and assaulted them.

1968

The violence of the Cultural Revolution worsened, affecting Sichuan especially



Dai Guangyu in 1975 in the painting studio of Sichuan University. His landscape paintings can be seen in the background.

severely. Factions of the Red Guards attacked each other with firearms, even cannons. Ironically, they all claimed to be defending Chairman Mao. The environment was so dangerous as to threaten the basic human right of survival.

In view of the severity of the situation, so they would be able to defend themselves, and to benefit their general health, Dai Guangyu's mother entrusted both her sons, Guangyu and Guangwen, to study northern style martial arts of the Zhao School (Shaolin style) with famous martial arts master Wang Xuexian, the son of a close friend.

1969

Universities and high schools continued to be suspended (they did not enroll any students during the Cultural Revolution). Middle schools and elementary schools resumed classes—"resume classes for the revolution." To relieve social pressure, professors of Sichuan University, who had nothing to do, opened the "Middle School of Sichuan University," where Dai Guangyu was enrolled.

1972

Dai Guangyu graduated from middle school. The Middle School of Sichuan University was shut down.

High schools resumed classes. Dai Guangyu was rejected from high school because of his family background, and this ended his formal education.

He spent time with art students of his age and started to teach himself about art. At the time, he developed a basic understanding of Western art by reading his father's Republican-period copy of Liu Haisu's five-volume *Masterpieces of European Painting*. In a society where resources were extremely scarce, this book gave Dai Guangyu a crucial foundation of art-historical knowledge. In the chaos of the decade-long Cultural Revolution, China was secluded from the rest of the world, and people's thoughts were constrained. Such books virtually disappeared. The Dai family's copy thus became a treasure circulated among his friends and even teachers.



Autumn 1976, Dai Guangyu's father Dai Zhili (standing) and calligrapher/expert of lyric poetry Liu Chujun, demonstrating calligraphy on Dai Guangyu's painting table.

1973

Dai Guangyu took on a variety of temporary manual work and roamed the streets. He made a name for himself for his involvement in gang fights on and off campus. His father called him a "problem youth."

To keep Dai from trouble, his father encouraged him to study classical literature and calligraphy, and sent him to study under the famous local painter Shi Xiaochang. Being elderly and illness-ridden, Shi referred Dai Guangyu to the renowned Sichuan artist Zhao Yunyu. However, Dai Guangyu could not stand the strictness of traditional gongbi painting and soon stopped attending classes.

Offended but unable to do anything about it, Dai Guangyu's father found another teacher for him.

1974

Under art educator Li Gefu, Dai Guangyu began his formal training in painting. Meanwhile, he studied classical poetry and calligraphy with Liu Chujun and Li Qiliang, both calligraphers and experts of lyric poetry. Under his father's guidance, he also studied classical Chinese painting theory, including Shitao's *Remarks on Painting* and Dong Qichang's *Notes from the Painting-Meditation Studio*, gradually improving his theoretical knowledge and painting techniques.

1975

Dai Guangyu started working at the Arts and Crafts Cooperation of Chengdu.

Interested in aesthetics, Dai Guangyu borrowed H. Parker's *The Principles of Aesthetics*, Taine's *The Philosophy of Art*, and Zhu Guangqian's translation of *A History of Western Aesthetics* (1950's edition), as well as other theoretical publications from the Sichuan University Library.

1976

Dai Guangyu studied sketching and oil painting with painter He Zhesheng.

In September, Dai Guangyu's classmate Xia Ping introduced him to Xu Dacheng, a



Dai Guangyu, devoted to landscape painting in 1978.

public space designer at Nanjiao Park in Chengdu. Ten years later, Dai Guangyu and Xu Dacheng would both be founding members of the Red-Yellow-Blue Group.

Dai met Guizhou-born artist Yin Guangzhong at Xie Yinming's apartment at Sichuan Conservatory of Music. Yin's outlook and understanding of art was remarkable. They had a very meaningful conversation.

1977

The national university entrance examination was reinstated. Situated next to the auditorium of Sichuan Conservatory of Music, the admissions center for art schools was flooded with applicants. Dai Guangyu did not plan to apply but only observed the busy activity.

During this time, he frequently brought his paintings to his friend Luo Lunjian's house to seek his father Luo Xinzhi's guidance. Luo Xinzhi had been one of Zhang Daqian's favorite students.

1978

Dai Guangyu applied to the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute but did not complete the application process. Dai Guangyu and his father would later have many arguments about this.

In the summer, Dai Guangyu participated in the *Art Exhibition at Qunyi Gallery of Dongcheng District* with his ink and color painting *Life Study of Wangjiang Pavilion*, where a work by renowned painter Wang Jingheng won the main award. During the award ceremony, Tang Rongxin, the director of Qunyi Gallery spoke highly of Dai Guangyu's creativity. Dai met Wang Jingheng for the first time; years later they were to become very close friends.

Dai Guangyu purchased two copies of Rodin's *Art*, one for himself and another as a gift to his teacher He Zhesheng. Startled, He asked: "Is this the kind of book you usually read?" When Dai answered yes, He was much pleased.

Dai Guangyu audited many classes on aesthetics in the Chinese Department of Sichuan University, read a great number of books on aesthetics, and took abundant notes.



Sketching in his father's study. Dai Guangyu's rendering of the Three Gorges scenery is visible on the wall behind (1978).



Dai Guangyu on the Great Wall (Beijing, 1979)

1979

Because of his special skills in the arts, Dai was assigned to work in the Arts and Crafts Cooperation of Sichuan and became an art designer in the Provincial Souvenirs Department. His office was in the exhibition hall next to Sichuan Art Gallery, which he visited regularly.

The art journal *Meishu* (volume 5) published Wu Guanzhong's essay "Formalist Aesthetics in Painting," which triggered heated discussions in the art world. Wu's perspective on art was a major influence on Dai Guangyu.

In the fall, Sichuan Art Gallery mounted the exhibition *Woodblock Prints by Käthe Kollwitz*.

In the winter, Dai Guangyu went on a business trip to Beijing, where he saw the Star Art Exhibition in Beihai Park and visited the Great Wall.

1980

In the summer, Yin Guangzhong visited Dai Guangyu. They talked about the Stars Art Group and the Xidan Democracy Wall. Yin told Dai Guangyu that the editors of *Meishu* did not understand abstract art as they had printed his work in reverse. Yin was very disappointed and asked the journal to apologize. The journal printed a correction and an apology in a following issue. Discussions on artistic language and formalist aesthetics triggered by Wu Guanzhong's essay continued to intensify, a highly unusual phenomenon in the art world at the time.

1981

In the spring, Dai Guangyu visited Kuanglu. He took a cruise that went upstream from Wuhan, through the Three Gorges on the Yangtze River, to Chongqing. Dai was amazed by the spectacular scenery of the Three Gorges.

In the summer, Dai Guangyu went to Northern Sichuan to make sketches. A flood detained him temporarily in the ancient city of Langzhong. The railroad was shut down, forcing him to make a detour around Jiange to return to Chengdu. At Jianmen Pass, the majestic scenery of the long and winding Old Jiannan trail, with its magnificent ancient cypress trees left a lasting impression on him.



June 1986, at the opening of Red, Yellow, Blue: Young Artists of Sichuan at the Sichuan Art Gallery.



Dai Guangyu giving a speech at the inaugural event of the Red, Yellow, Blue Group, 1986.

1983

The Anti-Spiritual Pollution and the Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization movements broke out. The call by the art and culture community for a return to humanistic values and intellectual freedom was suppressed.

Dai Guangyu married Li Yimei, the daughter of his first art teacher Li Gefu.

1984

In October, Dai's son Dai Xitao was born.

1985

In July, the Academy of Fine Arts at the Research Institute of Art in China published the inaugural issue of *Fine Arts in China*. A professional art newspaper dedicated to introducing avant-garde art to the public, *Fine Arts in China* was to play a major role in the growth of new art in China.

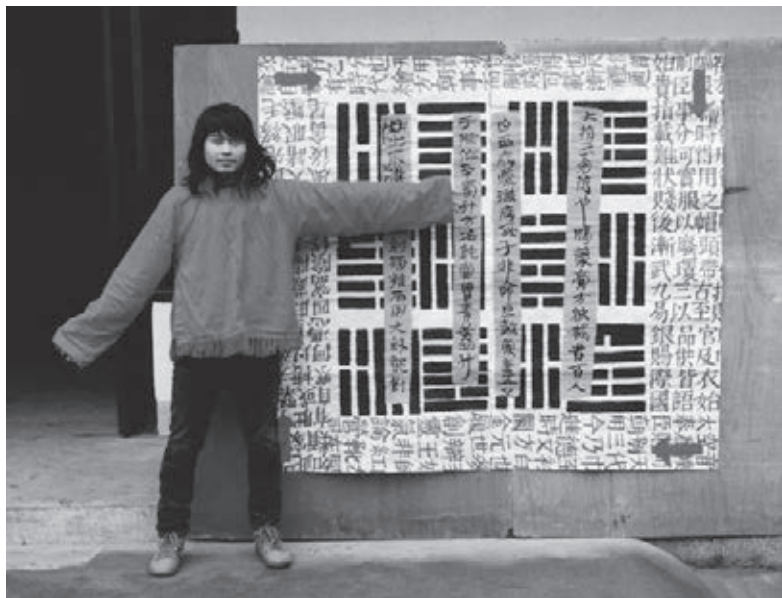
In the summer, *Jiangsu Art Monthly* published Li Xiaoshan's controversial article "My View on Contemporary Chinese Painting." His opinion that Chinese painting had "reached a dead end" caused an uproar in the art world.

In November, the National Art Museum of China opened an exhibition of works by the American artist Robert Rauschenberg. This was the first time that original works by an internationally renowned Western artist were displayed in China since World War II. It has remained a topic of discussion even today, shaping the development of contemporary Chinese art for decades.

Attracted to abstract expressionism, Dai Guangyu studied postwar American art, but used surrealist-like techniques in his own practice. "This is a strategic choice. The most pressing thing for China now is to start an anti-establishment movement." At the end of the year, he created many oil paintings, including *Introduction* and *The Direction of My Hands*.

1986

On June 19, the exhibition *Red, Yellow, Blue: Young Artists of Sichuan* opened at the



Dai Guangyu at his studio in Chengdu, 1989.



February 1989, after the forced closure of the China Avant-Garde Exhibition, Dai Guangyu, Li Jixiang and Wang Falin photographed in front of the notification of closure.

Sichuan Art Gallery. It was initiated and organized by Li Jixiang, Zhu Kaijia, and Xu Dacheng. More than 70 local young artists participated, and more than 340 artworks were displayed. The press called the exhibition "bizarre and quirky" but unanimously deemed it "an unprecedented success." The exhibition's preface was written by Gao Ertai, a famous philosopher of aesthetics. Prominent art critic Wang Lin said it was "the first modern art exhibition in a true sense in Chengdu after the Cultural Revolution." Dai Guangyu's oil paintings *Introduction*, *The Direction of My Hands* (set of two), and *The Nature of Religion* were on view.

Introduction was published in *Fine Arts in China*, volume 28. This was the first work by Dai Guangyu to be published in a professional art newspaper.

In October, Luo Lunjian took Dai Guangyu along on a visit to famous painter Wang Jingheng. They became close friends despite their difference in age.

On December 7th, the Red-Yellow-Blue Group was founded. Dai Guangyu was nominated executive director. The inauguration ceremony and exhibition took place at the Chengdu Nanjiao Park. Gao Ertai and renowned poet Bei Dao attended the event and gave speeches.

1988

In April, Dai Guangyu's oil paintings *Terrifying Height*, *Self-Transcendence*, and *New Ideas* were exhibited in the *Itinerary Exhibition of Modern Chinese Art* (Bonn, Bremen, and Frankfurt, Germany), organized by the Sino-German Friendship Association. He participated in the *88 Star Modern Art Exhibition organized by Star Poetry Journal* at the Sichuan Exhibition Hall.

In June, China Central Television broadcasted *River Elegy*, a six-episode documentary directed by Su Xiaokang and Wang Luxiang in consultation with Jin Guantao and Fang Yining. It celebrated Western and modern civilization, and heavily criticized the ills of feudal autocracy and totalitarian governance. It stirred up numerous discussions and had an enormous cultural impact.

That summer, Wang Jingheng and his wife Ge Fengzhen visited Dai Guangyu. It was the last day of Wang's exhibition at the Sichuan Art Gallery. He was very animated and gave Dai Guangyu some photographs of the exhibition.

In October, Dai Guangyu's oil painting *Awaiting Penetration—My River* was selected for



Gao Ertai and his wife visiting Dai Guangyu at his studio in Chengdu, spring 1990.

the *1988 Southwest Art Exhibition*, curated by Lv Peng at the Sichuan Exhibition Hall.

In the autumn, Dai Guangyu created works including *Treatise on Buddha Nature and Stolen Traces of Time*. While he continued to experiment with ink, his main practise by this time was in mixed media art.

Also in the fall, a forum on Chinese modern art took place in Huangshan. Dai Guangyu, Li Jixiang, and Wang Falin were invited, but none of them actually attended.

1989

On February 5th, the China Avant-Garde Art Exhibition opened at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing. Dai Guangyu was invited to participate and showed *This is That* (mixed-media) and *Journals of the Resurrection of a Dead Genius* (mixed-media). The exhibition was shut down soon after it opened. *This is That* was published in *Jiangsu Art Monthly* in a special feature on the exhibition (volume 2, inside cover).

In February, Dai Guangyu began conceptualizing the *Mogao Caves* series (mixed-media) as well as the *Zhuangzi* series (mixed-media), and to plan his Dai Guangyu Solo Exhibition.

On April 15, Hu Yaobang, former General Secretary of the Communist Party, passed away. Many university students in Beijing mourned his passing and engaged in commemorative activities.

In this context, Dai Guangyu began working on his series, *The Elimination of Words*. In an attempt to capture fleeting thoughts as ink traces on *xuan* paper, he began blending the sounds and indistinct word structures that were in the public discourse of this period.

In this tense atmosphere, the intellectual world fell silent, and the arts and culture community became despondent. The '85 New Wave Movement came to an end. For a long time, the arts and culture community remained in a state of depressed dormancy. For several years, almost all art exhibitions were suspended. Some academics refer to this as the Chinese art world's "dormant period."

In despair, many artists gave up their careers. For example, to this day, fewer than



“The Three Musketeers of Chengdu,” as they were called at the time. From left to right: Dai Guangyu, Li Jixiang, Wang Falin.

ten of the several dozens of artists in the Red-Yellow-Blue Group are still producing art.

During this time, Dai Guangyu created a large number of ink works, including *Marks of Corrosion*, *64 Whiplashes*, and *64 Days of Tea*. Made from commonplace materials and using simple techniques, these works were direct expressions of his emotions in a distilled artistic language, like the natural melting of a frozen ink cube on a stack sheets of *xuan* paper, or whipping a canvas belt dipped in ink against *xuan* paper. These works, which emerged out of this historical period, directly influenced the development of his art practice in the 1990s.

During this time, Dai Guangyu traveled to Tibet twice between October and November.

In November, Dai Guangyu returned to Chengdu. He left his well-paying job and became a professional artist who traded his financial security, for time and energy to devote to his practice.

At the end of the year, considering the social context of the time, Dai Guangyu felt that what was most urgently needed was not another solo exhibition, but rather an intellectually and artistically inspiring group exhibition. He thus abandoned his plans for a solo exhibition and began to organize a group exhibition instead.

Around the same time, Dai Guangyu found a simple one-story building near his home and turned it into his first art studio.

1990

At the beginning of the year, Dai Guangyu completed all his works for the group exhibition (originally intended for his solo exhibition). The exhibition planning went well, except that the venue had to be changed from the Sichuan Exhibition Hall (the space of the Sichuan Artists Association) to the Chengdu Art Salon (the space of the Chengdu Artists Association), because the Sichuan Artists Association was wary of the potential trouble of hosting avant-garde art. Its director Long Yuegao explained diplomatically, "Due to the current situation, it is not advisable to accept modern art into the space for exhibition."

In March, the *ooo'go Exhibition of Modern Art*, organized and curated by Dai Guangyu successfully opened at the Chengdu Art Salon. Critic Wang Lin praised its



At Dai Guangyu's exhibition, photographed with Wang Jingheng. Chengdu, 1991.

grand scope and influence: "In the so-called dormant period, [this exhibition] was like a sudden clap of thunder in silence. Its significance for southwestern art, and even for Chinese contemporary art as a whole, deserves further consideration."

In the spring, philosopher of aesthetics Gao Ertai, and his wife Pu Xiaoyu visited Dai Guangyu in his studio, along with Xiao Xuehui and Hao Le. The Gaos had earlier seen Dai Guangyu's works at the *ooo'go Exhibition of Modern Art*. Now viewing another series of new works in his studio, Gao was highly complimentary.

1991

In late spring / early summer, the Gaos visited Dai Guangyu's studio again.

In September, the *Dai Guangyu, Wang Falin, Li Jixiang Exhibition of Paintings*, organized and curated by Dai Guangyu, opened at the Chengdu Art Salon, infusing the depressed art world with new energy.

1992

In October, *Mr. Shitao, Listed as Wanted* (mixed-media) and *Conservation Plan for Cultural Relics* (mixed-media) were selected for the Lv Peng-curated *First Biennale of Chinese Art in the gos* in Guangzhou. *Mr. Shitao, Listed as Wanted* received the Award of Excellence.

1993

At the beginning of the year, Joan Lebold Cohen, the American art historian and author of *Yunnan School: A Renaissance in Chinese Painting*, interviewed Dai Guangyu at his studio.

In March, *Dai Guangyu—Exhibition of Paintings* opened at Galerie Samuel Lallouz, Montreal, Canada, presenting ten of Dai Guangyu's works, including *Zhuangzi #2* and the *Mogao Caves* series.

Arrest Warrant and *The Great Compassion Mantra* series were displayed in *Dream of China: Exhibition of Paintings*, curated by Gao Ertai at the Hong Kong City Hall. Gao had entrusted Dai Guangyu to solicit and organize works by other Chengdu artists



Dai Guangyu in October 1992, with his award-winning work at the First Biennale of Chinese Art in the 90s, Guangzhou.

for this exhibition.

In April, Dai Guangyu participated in the traveling exhibition *Inside-Out: New Chinese Art*, which was held in Toronto, Vancouver, and Ottawa and curated by the renowned artist and promoter of the arts Professor Bruce Parsons.

Dai Guangyu began work on an outdoor piece, *Chinese Landscape I*. He stripped various advertisements from public billboards, brought them into his studio, and reassembled them onto two four-panel screens.

At the end of the year, a representative of the Public Affairs Section at the Chengdu Consulate of the United States Embassy recommended Dai Guangyu for the United States Information Agency's (USIA) International Visitor Program, encouraging him to visit the U.S. for academic exchange. However, when Dai went to the Entry-Exit Administration Department of Chengdu Police Security Bureau to apply for a passport, he was told that his request would "not be processed."

1994

At the beginning of the year, Dai Guangyu worked on *Chinese Landscape II*, an outdoor installation in a house to be demolished.

After several twists and turns, Dai Guangyu was referred to the Foreign Affairs Office, where his application for a passport was finally granted. The International Visitor Program officially invited Dai Guangyu to visit the U.S. along with painter Peng Xiancheng from the Sichuan Poetry-Calligraphy-Painting Association and painter Zeng Xiaofeng from the Yunnan Artist Association.

In May and June, Dai Guangyu, Peng, and Zeng traveled around the U.S. Their interpreters were Mr. Robert Daly, a retired officer of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and Shu Yuan, who had earned his master's degree in the U.S. They visited a number of national museums, universities, institutes of arts and culture (including art foundations), and galleries in Washington D.C., New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, and Phoenix, as well as a variety of artist studios.

At the end of June, Joan Lebold Cohen visited Chengdu, and gave a lecture on art at the U.S. Embassy in Chengdu. Cohen visited Dai Guangyu again at his studio.



Joan Lebold Cohen (center) interviewing Dai Guangyu. Chengdu, 1993.

1995

In March, Dai Guangyu created an installation at the soon-to-be-demolished Fuqin Apartment Complex which lay empty at First Ring Road (West). Entitled *A Red Room, and the Landscape Outside of It*, the work consisted of two parts: 1. "Haunted"; 2. "Black&White Flesh." The exhibition was shut down. Because of this incident, a third component was added to the artwork: "Suggestions from the Propaganda Department of the Provincial Party Committee Concerning the 'Red Room' Incident."

In April, Dai Guangyu convinced several Chengdu avant-garde artists to participate in *Keepers of the Waters—Outdoor Art Performances* through the "Slideshow Symposium of Chinese and American Artists and Scientists" (Garment Factory of Chengdu Military Zone). He advised American artist Betsy Damon to change her project of a tour along the Yangtze River promoting environmental awareness, to a single-location art event, and to set the location in Chengdu.

In August, Dai Guangyu collaborated with Damon in organizing *Keepers of the Waters—Outdoor Art Performances*. After combined efforts by several parties, the week-long art event *Keepers of the Waters—Outdoor Art Performances (First Art Action)* opened in a public space along Chengdu's Funan River. Dai Guangyu's outdoor installation *Long-Abandoned Water Standards* was displayed along the east shore of Jinjiang Bridge.

Keepers of the Waters—Outdoor Art Performances was the first successful public display of installation and performance art legally conducted in China. Since this event was supported by the local government, the sponsoring organization Chengdu Environmental Protection Bureau welcomed the media, generating a great amount of press coverage.

Chengdu became the first Chinese city whose media published positive reviews on performance art. Dai Guangyu used *Keepers of the Waters—Outdoor Art Performances* as an opportunity to form an alliance with media reporters, effectively setting a foundation for the legitimization of avant-garde art.

1996

In April, the weekly exhibition series *Listen to Men Telling Stories of Women*, sponsored by Liang Jinping, the founder of YaFeng Gallery, Chengdu, and curated by

critic Wang Lin, opened at YaFeng Gallery. This exhibition was truly innovative and eye-opening. Ten male artists were each invited to display a work for a week. These works told women's stories from a man's perspective. The first artist to exhibit, Dai Guangyu presented *Lemonade, Everything Was so Infinite* (installation).

In June, *Chengdu Oil Painting Exhibition* opened at the National Art Museum of China, Beijing. Paintings from Dai Guangyu's *Referendum* series (two works) were on view.

In June, the triptych *Landscape on the Wall*, (mixed-media), and *Permissiveness* (series of six paintings, mixed-media), participated in the *China! Contemporary Painting* exhibition at Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany, which acquired all of Dai's works afterwards.

In July, *Keepers of the Waters—Outdoor Art Performances (Second Art Action)* was displayed in the public space along the Lhasa River, Tibet. Dai Guangyu's performance works *Listening and Resurrection '96, Lhasa* were shown alongside works by other artists, including Datong Dazhang and Song Dong. Many of the artists met for the first time.

At the end of the event, Dai Guangyu partnered with Li Jixiang, Song Dong, Yin Xiuzhen, Zhang Xin, and Yu Leiqing (editor-in-chief of *Art World Magazine*) to travel to Mount Everest together. The danger and beauty of the Tibetan landscape could only be fully experienced at the Everest Base Camp. This trip made Dai Guangyu understand the insignificance of Man in face of nature and the importance of spiritual belonging. His most important lesson from this trip was how to live in the world with humility. At night, he stayed at Rongbuk Monastery, which is the highest monastery on earth at 4980 metres above sea level. In the night sky, he could clearly see the innumerable stars and curve of the Milky Way, which made him ponder these simple questions: Who are we? Where are we from? Where are we going?

In September, Dai Guangyu created the outdoor installation *Resurrection '96, Chengdu* on the east campus of Sichuan University.

1997

In the spring, Dai Guangyu executed the performance *I am a Good Person* at an urban public space.

That summer, he opened his studio at Chengdu Central Gardens 152B to the public for his installation *Borderline*.

In July, in order to consolidate the healthy ecology which had been characteristic of the art scene in Chengdu since 1995, Dai Guangyu initiated and founded the 719 Artist Studio Alliance.

The initiator of this association was Dai Guangyu, with Zha Changping as academic consultant. Members included Liu Chengying, Zeng Xun, Zhu Gang, Zhang Hua, Yin Xiaofeng, Yu Ji, Zhou Bin, Hu Jian, and Luo Zidan (who later left the organization).

In October, the exhibition *Man in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, curated by Dai Guangyu with academic consultation by Zha Changping, opened in the empty complex of the former Chengdu Lacquerware Factory. Dai Guangyu showed the performance and installation work *Shooting at Myself*.

In August, he conducted the performance *Leaving Traces* at an unofficial burial ground near Chengdu's Shuangliu International Airport.

In November, the *Resources—Life: Keepers of the Waters—Outdoor Art Performances (Third Art Action)*, curated by Dai Guangyu with academic consultation by Zha Changping, took place at the site of the ancient Dujiangyan irrigation system. This event was hosted by the Environmental Protection Bureau and fully documented by the production team of the CCTV program *Art Cosmos* under the direction of Wen Pulin. The resulting art documentary on ecological awareness, entitled *Tibet, Land of Snow* was broadcast repeatedly on multiple channels and had a major impact.

At the end of the year, Dai Guangyu, having repaired a broken vase, carried it with him everywhere he went, even at home, in a performance entitled *Embracing the Ruined, Preserving the Broken*.

1998

From the beginning of the year until the end of summer, Dai Guangyu conducted *Turning Stone to Gold*, a series of six performances.

Meanwhile, he also executed the performances *Fossil* and *Turning Stone to Gold* on a section of Ming-dynasty fortifications exposed by real estate development. He and several other artists in turn conducted performances on the wall, attracting media



1994 in Washington, before a work by Franz Kline.

attention and generating social discussion. Due to appeals from several parties, part of the Ming-dynasty city wall was preserved.

Afterwards, Dai Guangyu created the installation *Restoring—Water Traces and Ink Marks* in the public space at Section Two of the First Ring Road (West) in Chengdu. A frozen ink cube was placed onto a framed table and left to melt naturally. The ink bled onto the table, then dripping onto *xuan* paper on the floor, thus becoming a dynamic abstract ink painting.

In August, the Dai Guangyu-curated exhibition *In Defense of Memory* opened in the soon-to-be-demolished century-old library building of the Sichuan Provincial Library (in fact, the demolition works had already begun, the building was vacant). Broadly publicized by the media, this exhibition stimulated much public discussion on whether the century-old library should be preserved, and on the profit-driven collusion between business and government causing the destruction of a national library and its historic buildings. These voices forced the real estate developer to cancel the demolition, and the Sichuan Provincial Library was preserved.

In September, Dai Guangyu performed the work *Meditation*, sitting in meditation in the middle of a major traffic thoroughfare at Section Two of the First Ring Road (West), to experience the possibility of meditation amidst running cars and the polarity of stillness and motion.

1999

In April, Dai Guangyu was invited to participate in the Jin Feng-curated exhibition *Unusual Ways of Writing* at the Art Museum of Nanjing Normal University.

On an unmentionable anniversary in early June, he conducted the performance *Missing*.

In the summer, on the occasion of the third anniversary of the "719 Artist Studio Alliance," Dai Guangyu and Zha Changping co-curated the exhibition *Basement Manuscript*, in which Dai conducted the performance *Absorbing - Being Absorbed*.

In August, he participated in the exhibition *Idea, Concept* at East China Normal University and presented his installation *96 Million Square Kilometers, Reduced by 24 Square Meters*.



After the founding of the 719 Artist Studio Alliance in 1997, the teahouse at the Chengdu Municipal Library became a regular meeting-place for group members discussing projects. Dai Guangyu second from left.

Director Chen Zhong filmed Dai Guangyu for his feature film *Jaywalking* (a documentary on the lives and practices of the avant-garde artists of Chengdu).

In the fall, Dai Guangyu was invited by Wang Lin to participate in *Interactive Time: Chinese Painting Exhibition* (Chongqing). *Restoring—Water Traces and Ink Marks* was performed again.

In December, *Chinese Artists in the World—Installation and Documentary* at the Cattle Depo Artist Commune in Hong Kong featured documents of Dai Guangyu's important works from the 1990s.

The exhibition *Gate of the Century: 1979-1999*, held at the Chengdu Contemporary Art Gallery, and curated by Liu Xiaochun, opened on the evening of the last day of the twentieth century and, appropriately for its name, remained open through midnight. Dai Guangyu presented his work *When Stillness Culminates Movement Begins*, an installation work, which borrows the visual theme of the oozing and setting of ink (as well as the withering of flowers) to illustrate the hidden conflict between material and mental objectives, as against the meaning of life and the impermanence of existence.

2000

In February, the exhibition *Think of Danger in Times of Safety*, curated by Dai Guangyu and Liu Chengying, opened in the public space of Guihu Lake Park in Xindu near Chengdu.

In October, Dai Guangyu traveled to Germany to participate in the itinerary exhibition *Zen ohne Sur* (Hanover, Duisburg, and Düsseldorf, Germany) with Liu Chengying.

In December, the Dai Guangyu-curated event *Explaining Water—Keepers of the Waters—Fourth Art Action* opened in the public space along the waterways of the ancient Dujiangyan irrigation system in Chengdu. Television channels and the five major newspapers of Chengdu documented the entire event.

2001

In January, the exhibition *Holding the White Piece*, curated by Dai Guangyu and



After the execution of *Shooting at Myself*, photographed with supporters.

Zhou Chunya opened at the Chengdu Art Academy. Dai Guangyu presented his *Landscape—Feng Shui and White is Not Necessarily Good*.

At the The Cattle Depot Artist Commune in Hong Kong, Dai Guangyu performed his work *Braindead*.

In September, *Friday—Concerning Sound*, organized by Dai Guangyu and Xi Yongjun opened at the Chengdu Eastern Centre. This was an occasion for poets and artists to "make sound"—performance art or poetry—together on the same stage. Participants included poets Che Qianzi, Shu Cai, Mo Fei, Jiang Hao, Ya Shi, Shi Weibo, Xi Yongjun, and artists Yu Ji, Yin Xiaofeng, Zhu Gang, Zhang Hua, Song Yongxing, and Dai Guangyu. On the night before the opening, after the panel discussion, the September 11 attacks occurred. The theme and form of the event remained unchanged, but all subsequent discussion centered around September 11.

In December, the Dai Guangyu-curated exhibition *Parabola* opened in Mao Gardens, Chengdu.

The first Chengdu Biennale, curated by Liu Xiaochun, opened at the Chengdu Contemporary Art Gallery. Dai Guangyu's installation *Deathbed* and performance artifact of *Braindead* were exhibited.

2002

From March to May, Dai Guangyu organized the *Performance Art Hebdomadal Exhibition Series* (Chengdu Triune Bookstore). Each week, an artist was invited to conduct a performance, followed by a symposium hosted by poet Sun Wen.

In the summer, Dai Guangyu traveled to Japan and participated in the 7th Platform of Asian Performance Art (PAPA)-Nippon International Performance Art Festival (NIPAF), organized and curated by Japanese performance artist Seiji Shimoda.

2003

In April, Dai Guangyu curated *Interlocking Floors: Know White - Preserve Black: Live Art Exhibition* in the public space at Chengdu Sports Center. The only requirement for participation was to show up with the entire body painted white.

In May, the *China-Japan Performance Art Exchange Project 2003*, curated by Dai



Execution of an ink performance installation work, dousing ink with a watering can. Chengdu, 1997.

Guangyu and Seiji Shimoda took place at the ChengDu Academy of Fine Arts.

In the autumn of this year, Dai Guangyu moved from Chengdu to Beijing.

2004

In April, *Transborder Language 2004—Volume Control—First Dashanzi International Art Festival* opened at the 798 Art District. Curated by Huang Rui, Thomas Berghuis (Netherlands), and Dai Guangyu, this event attracted 24 artists from France, Italy, Japan, and China.

2005

In May, Dai Guangyu participated in *Transborder Language: Performance Art / Language Art—at the Second Dashanzi International Art Festival*, which was held at 798 Art Factory. The performance *Incontinence* was executed at Beijing Tokyo Art Projects there.

2007

In the spring, Dai Guangyu conducted the performance “*Mend the Fold If a Sheep Is Lost*”—*A Sheep’s Lecture on Chinese Contemporary Art* at South Gate Space, Beijing.

In May, Dai Guangyu participated in the live performance art event which was part of the *Made in China* exhibition at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebaek, Denmark, where he presented his performance *The Failure of Defense*.

In June, Dai Guangyu's solo exhibition *When the Waters Recede, the Rocks Appear*, curated by Bérénice Angrémy, opened at Red Star Gallery, Beijing. The night before the opening, after the installation was completed, the inspection agency of 798 Art District demanded that *Tian An Men – Heaven Knows* be removed. On the morning of the opening, the agency came to the gallery again and demanded that *Beyond the Clouds* be removed, threatening to shut down the exhibition otherwise.

In July, Dai Guangyu was invited by curator Maya Kóvskaya to participate in *China Under Construction I*, part of Art Houston at Deborah Colton Gallery, Texas.

Dai Guangyu and Li Yimei were divorced.



Spring Festival 2012, Dai Guangyu with his 96 year-old father, at his parents' home on Sichuan University campus.

Dai Guangyu participated in *Starting from the Southwest: Exhibition of Contemporary Art in Southwest China*, curated by Wang Lin and hosted by Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou.

2008

In March, Dai Guangyu participated in *China Under Construction II*, curated by Maya Kóvskaya and part of Fotofest 12th Photography Biennale, Deborah Colton Gallery, Houston.

In June, *Interval of Silence—Contemporary Art from China*, curated by Dai Guangyu and academically directed by Wang Lin, opened at Red Star Gallery. The participating artists included Wen Pulin, Huang Rui, Ai Weiwei, Zhang Dali, Zhang Nian, Sheng Qi, Jin Feng, Cang Xin, He Yunchang, He Chengyao, Han Bing, Chen Linyang, and Li Luming.

On November 1st, Dai Guangyu's solo exhibition *Ink Games*, curated by Bérénice Angrémy, opened at Ifa Gallery, Shanghai. Dai Guangyu presented two important performances, *Memorial* (performance) and *A Scenery I Once Knew So Well* (performance, installation).

2009

In June, Dai Guangyu conducted the performance *Release* at the Summer Palace in Beijing. Ten years after *Missing*, *Release* was the second work he conceived in reference to a major historic event.

2010

In March, Dai Guangyu was invited to Paris by Ifa Gallery for the Art Paris Art Fair at the Grand Palais, where he conducted two performances, *Erased Memory and Flexible Type Printing*.

In October, *Dai Guangyu—Recent Works* opened at Galerie Adler, Paris.



Dai Guangyu and his wife Margarete Werner, discussing performance photography, 2013.

2011

In May, the exhibition *Shanshui - Poetry without Words? Landscape in Chinese Contemporary Art*, opened at Kunstmuseum Luzern, Switzerland. Dai Guangyu's *Landscape, Ink, Ice* was shown. The exhibition was co-curated by Ai Weiwei, Peter Fischer, and Uli Sigg.

2012

In January, Dai Guangyu participated in the Fourth Guangzhou Triennial, curated by Wang Lin where he showed works from his *Hostage* series of paintings.

In May, Ifa Gallery presented *Still Crossing, Dai Guangyu Solo Show* at Art Basel Hong Kong at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center. His performance installation *Know White - Preserve Black* was the centerpiece of the exhibition.

2013

In January, Dai Guangyu participated in the exhibition *Like a Thunder Out of China* in Montreal and Toronto.

In March, *Sensor Ship 0.46% Dai Guangyu, Gao Brothers, Zhang Dali* was on view at Art Basel Hong Kong.

In May, works from the *Hostage* series of paintings were displayed in *Voice of the Unseen*, a Collateral Event of the 55th Venice Biennale, curated by critic Wang Lin.

In June, Dai Guangyu was invited by curator Ping Jie to participate in *Insightful Charisma* at Himalayas Art Museum, Shanghai.

In November and December respectively, Dai Guangyu's parents passed away.

2014

In March, Dai Guangyu conducted the interactive performance installation *Stele* at Art Paris Art Fair.

In April, his solo exhibition *Diluted Shadows* opened at Ifa Gallery, Brussels.

In July, he participated in *OSTRALE'014 International Exhibition of Contemporary Arts* in Dresden, Germany and presented his highly-acclaimed performance installation

The Scroll of 'Lounging, High up by the Northern Window'.

In September, he and Margarete Werner were married.

He participated in the the group exhibition *Ink and the Body*, curated by Dr. Britta Erickson and Nataline Colonnello, at INK studio, Beijing.

From November, Dai Guangyu work was exhibited in *Secret Signs—Contemporary Chinese Art in the Name of Writing*, at Deichtorhallen, Collection Falckenberg, Hamburg, Germany, in a collaboration between Deichtorhallen, the Sigg Collection, and M+.

2015

In January, Dai Guangyu participated in the exhibition *Force 12 Hurricane* at Shanghai Mingyuan Art Museum.

In June, his solo exhibition *Dreamlike Memories of Wang River* opened at Tree Gallery, Beijing.

In October, his solo exhibition *Endowed with Speech from Birth*, curated by Liang Jinping and academically directed by Zhong Ming, opened at YaFeng Contemporary Art Gallery, Chengdu.

Opened in 1993, YaFeng Contemporary Art Gallery was the first professional gallery in Chengdu to specialize in avant-garde art. Its founder Liang Jinping has been a longtime supporter of the Chengdu avant-garde community led by Dai Guangyu, and has sponsored many avant-garde art events. On this occasion, he coorganized Dai Guangyu's solo exhibition with renowned poet and writer Zhong Ming, and published an accompanying artist's monograph in order to present Dai Guangyu's recent works, and to reintroduce his accomplishments to Chengdu, more than a decade after his departure.

2016

In November, *Wen Pulin Archive of Chinese Avant-Garde Art, 1980s and 1990s* at the Red Brick Art Museum in Beijing thoroughly surveyed avant-garde art in Chengdu led by Dai Guangyu.

In October, Dai Guangyu participated in "Beijing Live - International Performance Art Festival," curated by Jonas Stampe and hosted by the Danish Cultural Center, where he conducted the interactive performance *Mountain Spring*.

2017

In July, Dai Guangyu participated in *Super Body: Performance Art and Its Documentary*, curated by Gu Zhenqing and Zhang Haitao at Li Space, Beijing.

On 10th September, *Making Traces: The Arts of Participation and Refusal*, curated by Maya Kóvskaya, opened at Ink Studio, Beijing. A conceptual retrospective of Dai Guangyu's performance practice, the exhibition showcased for the first time his performance artifacts.

In October, Dai Guangyu's works were shown at INK studio SOHO, in the exhibition *Never Forget*. Also in October, he participated in FIELD MEETING Take 5: Thinking Project during Asia Contemporary Art Week), with his performance of *The Failure of Defense—America at the Asia Society* in New York. ACAW is curated by Leeza Ahmady.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Lives and works in Beijing

- 1997 - present Editor and Creative Director of *Humanities & Art* (Shanghai Joint Publishing Company) since 1997.
- 1994 Visited the United States (Washington, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Phoenix) on the United States Information Agency's International Visitor Program
- 1955 Born in Chengdu, China

SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND PERFORMANCES

- 2017 *Dai Guangyu—Never Forget*, INK studio SOHO, New York, U.S.A.
The Failure of Defense—America (performance as part of FIELD MEETING Take 5: Thinking Project during Asia Contemporary Art Week), Asia Society, New York, U.S.A.
Making Traces: The Arts of Participation and Refusal, Ink Studio, Beijing, China
- 2015 *Endowed with Speech from Birth*, YaFeng Contemporary Art Gallery, Chengdu, China
Dreamlike Memories of Wang River, Tree Gallery, Beijing, China
- 2014 *Diluted Shadows*, Ifa Gallery, Brussels, Belgium
Black Paper, Ifa Gallery at Art Paris, Grand Palais, Paris, France
- 2012 *Still Crossing*, Dai Guangyu Solo Show, Ifa Gallery at Art Basel Hong Kong, China
- 2010 *Dai Guangyu—Recent Works*, Galerie Adler, Paris, France
Erased Memory and Flexible Type Printing (live performances), Ifa Gallery at Art Paris, Grand Palais, Paris, France
- 2008 *Ink Games*, Ifa Gallery, Shanghai, China
- 2007 *"Mend the Fold If a Sheep Is Lost"—A Sheep's Lecture on Chinese Contemporary Art*, South Gate Space, Beijing, China

- 2005 *When the Waters Recede, the Rocks Appear*, Red Star Gallery, Beijing, China
Little Scares: A Solo Exhibition of Dai Guangyu's Videos, Dogpig Art Café, Kaohsiung, Taiwan
- 2002 *Food and Words* (performance in a public space), Triune Bookshop, Chengdu, China
- 2000 *Shooting at Myself*, University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg, Germany
- 1999 *Making Love to the Earth* (performance in a public space), banks of Jinjiang River, Chengdu, China
Missing (performance in a public space), Chengdu and Wenjiang, China
- 1998 *Fossil* (performance in a public space), Ming-dynasty fortifications, Chengdu, China
Meditation (performance in a public space), Section 2, First Ring Road (West), Chengdu, China
Turning Stone to Gold (series of performances in public spaces), city center, Chengdu, China
- 1997 *I Am a Good Person* (performance in a public space), city center, Chengdu, China
A Frog in a Well (open exhibition), 152B Studio, Chengdu, China
Leaving Traces (performance in a public space), unofficial burial ground near Shuangliu International Airport, Chengdu, China
Borderline (open exhibition), 152B Studio, Chengdu, China
Like Flowing Water (performance in a public space), Hongqi Supermarket Ximen Branch, Chengdu, China
- 1996 *Resurrection '96*, Sichuan University (Eastern District), Chengdu, China
- 1995 *A Red Room, and the Landscape Outside of It* (room-sized installation), No. 164, Section Two, First Ring Road (West), Chengdu, China
- 1994 *Chinese Landscape* (room-sized installation), No. 164, Section 2, First Ring Road (West), Chengdu, China
- 1993 *Dai Guangyu—Exhibition of Paintings*, Galerie Samuel Lallouz, Montreal, Canada

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 *Super Body: Performance Art and Its Documentary*, Li Space, Beijing, China
- 2016 *Wen Pulin Archive of Chinese Avant-Garde Art, 1980s and 1990s*, Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing, China
Beijing Live—International Performance Art Festival, Danish Cultural Centre, Beijing, China
Deconstruction and Liberation of Ink, Changjiang Museum of Contemporary Art, Chongqing, China
Critical Connections, China-Switzerland Art Exhibition, Museum art-st-urban and Abbey St Urban, St Urban, Lucerne, Switzerland
 Group exhibition, Swiss Embassy, Beijing, China
Deconstruction and Liberation of Ink, Phoenix Art Palace, Wuxi, China
- 2015 *On Literati and Humanistic Ink Paintings*, Wanchai Gallery, Hong Kong, China
Enough of Art, Fuck Art, Espace Cinko, Paris, France
Ming Gathering / Force 12 Hurricane, Mingyuan Art Museum, Shanghai, China
- 2014 *Secret Signs—Contemporary Chinese Art in the Name of Writing*, Deichtorhallen, Collection Falckenberg, Hamburg, Germany
Open, Da Xiang Art Space, Taichung, Taiwan
Nanjing International Art Festival, Nanjing International Exhibition Center, Nanjing, China
Ink and the Body, Ink Studio, Beijing, China
OSTRALE'014—8th International Exhibition of Contemporary Arts (now OSTRALE Biennale of Contemporary Art), Ostragehege, Dresden, Germany
Reshaping Shuimo: New History, Jinling Art Museum, Nanjing, China
- 2013 *Forms of the Formless: Exhibition of International Contemporary Art*, TEDA Contemporary Art Museum, Tianjin; Hubei Museum of Art, Wuhan, China
A New Spirit in Ink—Contemporary Space Ink 2013, Museum of Contemporary Art, Beijing, China
Insightful Charisma, Himalayas Art Museum, Shanghai, China
Voice of the Unseen, Collateral Event of the 55th Venice Biennale,

- Venice, Italy
- Sensor Ship 0.46% Dai Guangyu, Gao Brothers, Zhang Dali*, Ifa Gallery at Art Basel Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China
- Like a Thunder Out of China*, Arsenal Toronto and Arsenal Montréal, Canada
- 2012 *My Country*, Ifa Gallery, Shanghai, China
- Paper, Art and Dao*, Yidian Art Center, Shanghai, China
- The Way of Writing*, Zendai Contemporary Art Space, Shanghai, China
- Undoing Shuimo*, Duolun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai; Museum of Contemporary Art, Beijing, China
- Disenchantment of Chinese Imagination*, Fourth Guangzhou Triennial, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China
- 2011 *Shanshui—Poetry without Words? Landscape in Chinese Contemporary Art*, Kunstmuseum Luzern, Switzerland
- Right Eye—Left Leg*, Ifa Gallery, Shanghai, China
- The Hell—The Heaven—On the Way—In Between*, Ifa Gallery, Shanghai, China
- 2009 *Passages: Video Art from the People's Republic*, Gallery OED, Kochi, India, curated by Maya Kóvskaya.
- Chinese Masters of Ink*, Grand Chamber of the Royal Castle Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland; Today Art Museum, Beijing, China
- Ink Storm*, Transformer Gallery, Washington DC, U.S.A.
- In the 1980s—Wen Pulin Archive of Chinese Avant-Garde Art Exhibition*, Shanghai Duolun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai, China
- OPEN International Performance Arts Festival 10th Anniversary Exhibition*, Realization Contemporary Art Center, Beijing, China
- 13 No KAOS*, Duffy Gallery, Kunming, China
- Ink—Not—Ink*, Shenzhen Art Museum, Shenzhen, China; Drexel University, Phoenix, U.S.A.
- 2008 *Oriental Imagination—The 3rd Asian International Art Exhibition*, Wall Art Museum, Beijing; UCITY Art Museum of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Art, Guangzhou, China
- Action-Camera: Beijing Performance Photography*, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada
- China Under Construction II* (part of Fotofest2008), Deborah Colton Gallery, Houston, U.S.A.
- Interval of Silence—Contemporary Art from China*, Red Star Gallery, Beijing,

- China
- 2007 *China Under Construction I* (part of Art Houston), Deborah Colton Gallery, Houston, U.S.A.
Made in China (live performance art event), Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark
Starting from the Southwest: Exhibition of Contemporary Art in Southwest China, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China
Echoes: Chengdu New Visual Art Documentary Exhibition 1989-2007, 1000 Plateaus Art Space, Chengdu, China
The 3rd China-Japan Performance Art Exchange Project 2007, Beijing, Chengdu, Xi'an, China
The Fragmented Gaze: Video Art from the People's Republic (video screening), Deborah Colten Gallery, Houston, U.S.A.
- 2006 *Misalignments: Chinese Performance & Video Art Documents*, Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley
Vital 06—International Chinese Live Art Festival, Chinese Arts Center, Manchester, U.K.
Red Star, Red Star, Red Star, Red Star Gallery, Beijing, China
- 2005 *Artists in Action—Performance Art Project*, Hong Kong, China
Inward Gazes—Documentaries of Chinese Performance Art, Macao Museum of Art, Macau, China
In Honor of '85, Shanghai Duolun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai, China
The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art, China Millennium Monument Art Museum, Beijing, China
Making Relations??!!!, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan
Transborder Language: Performance Art / Language Art—Second Dashanzi International Art Festival, Beijing Tokyo Art Projects, Beijing, China
China Live: Reflections on Contemporary Performance Art, Arnolfini, Bluecoat Arts Centre, Chapter Arts Centre, Chinese Arts Centre, Colchester Arts Centre, Warwick Arts Centre, Greenroom, BALTIC, Victoria and Albert Museum, U.K.
Rain Art Salon, Rain Gallery, Beijing, China
- 2004 *Performance Art in 798*, Thinking Hands, Beijing, China
Double Happiness Festival, Beijing Tokyo Art Projects, Beijing, China
Matchmaking, Eastlink Gallery, Shanghai, China

- Transborder Language 2004: Volume Control—First Dashanzi International Art Festival*, Beijing, China
- 2003 *NIPAF: Asia Central Europe, Performance Art Meeting 2003*, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland *Chinese Ink in Contemporary Art*, National Visual Arts Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia *Live International Performance Art*, Beijing Tokyo Art Projects, Beijing, China
China-Japan Performance Art Exchange Project 2003, Chengdu, Xi'an, Chongqing, China
Interlocking Floors: Know White—Preserve Black, Chengdu Sports Center, Chengdu, China
- 2002 *Harvest: Contemporary Art Exhibition*, National Agriculture Exhibition Center, Beijing, China
 First Chinese Art Triennial, Guangzhou Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China
Friday—Concerning Sound—Performance & Poetry Exchange, Chengdu Eastern Centre, Chengdu, China
Daydream, Nanjing Museum, Nanjing, China
Mushroom Cloud or Utopia, Old Suzhou River Warehouse, Shanghai, China
7th Platform of Asian Performance Art (PAPA)—Nippon International Performance Art Festival (NIPAF), Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya, and Nagano, Japan
Mask Vs Face, Red Gate Gallery, Beijing, China
- 2001 *Physical Resources and Objects*, Artist Commune, Hong Kong, China
Dialogo, Chinese Contemporary Art Exhibition, Mantova Museum, Mantova, Italy
Dialogo: Other—Chinese Contemporary Art Exhibition, Chiesa Santa Teresa dei Maschi, Bari, Italy
Top Bottom Left Right, Chengdu Museum of Modern Art, Chengdu, China
Crossroads, Chengdu Museum of Modern Art, Chengdu, China
Turning 360 Degrees—Contemporary China Art Archive Exhibition, Shanghai Mountain Art Space, Shanghai, China
Virtual Future, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China
Holding the White Piece, Chengdu Art Academy, Chengdu, China
Second OPEN International Performance Art Festival, Chengdu, Pengshan, and Leshan, China
An Exhibition of Ruinous Remains, Chengdu Working People's Culture

- Palace, Chengdu, China
 The First Chengdu Biennial, Chengdu Contemporary Art Gallery, Chengdu, China
- 2000 *Think of Danger in Times of Safety* (art action), Guihu Lake Park, Xindu, China
Zen ohne Sur (traveling art exhibition), Kunsthalle Faust, Hanover; Duisburger Stadtbibliothek, Duisburg; and Düsseldorf, Germany
Chinese Glamours—Conceptual Images, East Link Gallery, Shanghai, China
Cultural Landscape: Landscape Art Exhibition, Langdao, Guilin, China
Home? Contemporary Art Project Exhibition, Yuexing Furniture Warehouse, Shanghai, China
People and Animals (performance art exhibition), Chengdu, China
Explaining Water—Keepers of the Waters—Fourth Art Action, along Minjiang River from Dujiangyan to Chengdu, China
- 1999 *Chinese Artists in the World—Installation and Documentary*, Artist Commune, Hong Kong, China
Interactive Time: Chinese Painting Exhibition, Chongqing Department Store, Chongqing, China
Idea, Concept, East China Normal University, 666 Zhizaoju Lu, Shanghai, China
Unusual Ways of Writing, Art Museum of Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing, China
Basement Manuscript, Aozhen Gardens Underground Carpark, Chengdu, China
Gate of the Century: 1979-1999, Chengdu Contemporary Art Gallery, Chengdu, China
- 1998 *In Defense of Memory*, Sichuan Provincial Library, Chengdu, China
- 1997 *In the Wild* (multi-city simultaneous performance project), Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, and Guangzhou, China
Resources—Life: Keepers of the Waters—Third Art Action, Dujiangyan, China
Man in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, site of the former Chengdu Lacquer Factory, Chengdu, China
- 1996 *Keepers of the Waters—Outdoor Art Performances*, Lhasa, China
Chengdu Oil Painting Exhibition, National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China

- 1995 *China! Contemporary Painting*, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, Germany
Keepers of the Waters—Outdoor Art Performances, Chengdu, China
Jiangsu Huakan 20th Anniversary Exhibition, Nanjing Museum, Nanjing, China
- 1993 *Inside-Out: New Chinese Art*, Toronto, Canada
Dream of China: Exhibition of Paintings, City Hall, Hong Kong, China
- 1992 *First Biennale of Chinese Art in the 90's*, Central Hotel, Guangzhou, China
- 1991 *Dai Guangyu, Wang Falin, Li Jixiang Exhibition of Paintings*, Chengdu Art Salon, Chengdu, China
- 1990 *000'90 Exhibition of Modern Art*, Chengdu Art Salon, Chengdu, China
- 1989 *China Avant-Garde Art Exhibition*, National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China
- 1988 *1988 Southwest Art Exhibition*, Sichuan Art Gallery, Chengdu, China
Itinerary Exhibition of Modern Chinese Art, Bonn, Bremen, and Frankfurt, Germany
88 Star Modern Art Exhibition, Sichuan Art Gallery, Chengdu, China
- 1986 *Red, Yellow, Blue: Young Artists of Sichuan*, Sichuan Art Gallery, Chengdu, China

EXHIBITIONS AND PERFORMANCES CURATED BY DAI GUANGYU

- 2008 *Interval of Silence—Contemporary Art from China*, Red Star Gallery, Beijing, China
- 2004 *Transborder Language 2004: Volume Control—First Dashanzi International Art Festival*, Beijing, China
- 2003 *China-Japan Performance Art Exchange Project 2003*, Chengdu, Xi'an, Chongqing, China
Interlocking Floors: Know White—Preserve Black, Chengdu Sports Center, Chengdu, China
- 2002 *Performance Art Hebdomadal Exhibition Series*, Triune Bookshop, Chengdu, China
Friday—Concerning Sound—Performance & Poetry Exchange, Chengdu Eastern Centre, Chengdu, China

- 2001 *Parabola*, Maoyuan, Chengdu, China
Holding the White Piece, Chengdu Art Academy, Chengdu, China
- 2000 *Think of Danger in Times of Safety* (art action), Guihu Lake Park, Xindu, China
Explaining Water—Keepers of the Waters—Fourth Art Action, along Minjiang River from Dujiangyan to Chengdu, China
- 1999 *Basement Manuscript*, Aozhen Gardens Underground Carpark, Chengdu, China
- 1998 *In Defense of Memory*, Sichuan Provincial Library, Chengdu, China
Ming-dynasty Fortifications Live Exhibition Series and Academic Exposition for the Protection of Cultural Relics, Chengdu, China
- 1997 *Man in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, site of the former Chengdu Lacquer Factory, Chengdu, China
Resources—Life: Keepers of the Waters—Third Art Action, Dujiangyan, China
719 Artist Studio Alliance, teahouse of Chengdu Municipal Library, Chengdu, China
152B Open Studio Exhibition, Chengdu, China
- 1995 *Keepers of the Waters—Outdoor Art Performances*, Chengdu, China (in collaboration with Betsy Damon).
Slideshow Symposium of Chinese and American Artists and Scientists, Garment Factory of the Chengdu Military Zone, Chengdu, China
- 1991 *Dai Guangyu, Wang Falin, Li Jixiang Exhibition of Paintings*, Chengdu Art Salon, Chengdu, China
- 1990 *ooo'go Exhibition of Modern Art*, Chengdu Art Salon, Chengdu, China
- 1986 *Red, Yellow, Blue: Young Artists of Sichuan*, Sichuan Art Gallery, Chengdu, China

PUBLICATIONS OF DAI GUANGYU'S WRITINGS

“Yishu yuyan yu shengcun jingyan” 艺术语言与生存 经验 (Artistic language and life experience). In *Humanities and Arts 人文艺术*. Guiyang: Guizhou People's Publishing House, 2000. 139-158.

“Yishu liunian zheji chensha” 艺术流年 折戟沉沙 (The fleeting time of art / broken halberds buried in sand).

In *On Site 现场*. Nanning: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2005. 254-259.

“Qidai yu huanyuan” 期待与还原 (Expectation and restoration). In *Oriental Imagination 东方想象*. Guangzhou: Lingnan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2008. 39-48.

“Zhibai shouhei – yi Laozi sixiang wei hexin zhi yishuyan” 知白守黑——以《老子》思想为核心之艺术衍 (Knowing white and preserving black – aesthetic interpretations of the thought of Laozi). *Chinese Contemporary Art 中国当代艺术*. Hong Kong: China World Art Publishing House, 2011, 454-462.

“Deyi wangxing – Guanyu ‘wuxing zhixing’ yishuzhan” 得意忘形——关于《无形之形》艺术展 (Getting the meaning and forgetting the form—on the exhibition *Form of the Formless*). In *Form of the Formless 无形之形*. Shijiazhuang: Hebei Fine Arts Publishing House, 2013. 24-35.

“Women zaiqi – Bashi niandai gaoertai zai chengdu” 我们在起——八十年代高尔泰在成都 (We arise – Gao Ertai in Chengdu in the 80's). In *Humanities and Arts 人文艺术*. Guiyang: Guizhou People's Publishing House, 2014. 10-20.

“Wenmai duanan liyi” 文脉断案例一 (A case study of cultural lineage). In *The Growth from the Root of the Oriental Culture – Oil Painting and Mixed Media 东方根性的当代生长：当代中国性艺术家研究样本——油画及综合卷*, edited by Jiang Tao 江涛. Nanchang: Jiangxi Arts Publishing House, 2016. 116-125.

“Yixiang bianzheng—Wenrenhua xunzong yu duanxiang” 意象辨徵——文人画寻踪与断想 (The interpretation of images—reflections on the history of literati painting). In *Humanities and Arts 人文艺术*. Shanghai: Sanlian Books, 2016. 56-108.

“Guanyu shuxie zai dangdai yishu chuanguo zhongde qianjing” 关于书写在当代艺术创作中的前景 (On the prospect of shuxie in contemporary art creation) *Ku Art 库艺术* 12 (2016). 73-77.

BOOKS, ARTICLES AND REVIEWS

Angrémy, Bérénice 黎静. “Ink Body” 墨的身体. In *Oriental Imagination* 东方想象. Guangzhou: Lingnan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2008. 25-28.

Berghuis, Thomas, Maya Kóvskaya, and Keith Wallace. *Action-Camera: Beijing Performance Photography*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009.
Becker, Catherine. *La Marque Rouge*. Paris: Le Cherche Midi, 2014.

Ding Zhenggeng 丁正耕. “Shui zhenzheng dianfuzhe shuimo” 谁真正颠覆着水墨 (Who is truly subverting ink). In *State of Art* 艺术状态. Hong Kong: State of Art Magazine Press, 2007. Cover, inside cover, and title page.

Duan Lian 段炼. “Yige yilei yishujia” 一个异类艺术家 (A nonconformist artist). In *Image Jungle: Contemporary Art Criticism* 图像丛林——当代艺术批评. Taipei: Xiuwei Information Science and Technology Ltd., 2012. 97-101.

Duan Lian 段炼. “Chongfeng zai niuyue” 重逢在纽约 (A reencounter in New York). In *Touching Art* 触摸艺术. Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore Press, 2008. 178-183.

Duan Lian 段炼. “Yilei de Dai Guangyu” 异类的戴光郁 (Nonconformist Dai Guangyu). In *Oriental Imagination* 东方想象. Guangzhou: Lingnan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2008. 29-34.

Duan Lian 段炼. “Dai Guangyu” 戴光郁. In *Ink Not Ink—Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Ink Art* 墨非墨——中国当代水墨邀请展. Shijiazhuang: Hebei Fine Arts Publishing House, 2008. 10-13.

Kóvskaya, Maya 迈涯. *China Under Construction: Contemporary Art from the People's Republic*. Beijing: Futurista Art, 2007.

Kóvskaya, Maya 迈涯. “Neatly Arranged Freedom, Present Absences, Dislocated Contexts and Signs of Our Times: Some Readings of Dai Guangyu's Art.” In *When the Waters Recede The Rocks Appear: Dai Guangyu Works*, edited by Bérénice Angrémy. Beijing, Red Star Gallery, 2007. Reprinted in *Yishu Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* 7, no. 3 (May/June 2008): 90-98; in *Humanities and Arts* 人文艺术. Shanghai: Sanlian Books. 77-92.

Kóvskaya, Maya 迈涯. “Practices, Power and the Public Sphere: Dialogical Space and Multiple Modernities in Asian Contemporary Art.” *Mayday Magazine*, issue 2 (winter 2010).

Kóvskaya, Maya 迈涯. “Traversing Thresholds: A Showcase of Contemporary Art from

Across Asia.” *positions: asia critique* 20, no. 1 (2012).

Ruhrberg, Karl. *Art of the 20th Century*, Volume I. Cologne: Taschen Verlag, 1998. 398-399.

Tan Genxiong 谭根雄. “Fanchen de wenhuajiyi: Dai Guangyu” 泛沉的文化记忆: 戴光郁 (Cultural memories diffused and sunken: Dai Guangyu). In *Zhongguo dangdai yishu xingtai ge'an yanjiu* 中国当代观念艺术形态个案研究 (Case Study of Chinese Contemporary Conceptual Art Form). Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2015. 90-95.

Wen Pulin 温普林. “Shuzhong baguai: bujie dao Zhang Dai Guangyu” 蜀中八怪: 不戒道长戴光郁 (Eight Eccentrics of Shu: Non-Commandment Priest Dai Guangyu). In *Wandering in the Underworld—Unofficial Biography of Vanguard Artists in China* 江湖飘——中国前卫艺术家外传, edited by Wen Pulin, et. al. Changsha: Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2000. 102-107.

Wu Hung 巫鸿. *Chinese Art at the Crossroads: Between Past and Future, East and West*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002.

Zha Changping 查常平. “Xingwei tuxian – Dai Guangyu xingwei” 行为凸显——戴光郁行为 (Performing exception – Dai Guangyu's performance art). In *'85 zhijing, 2005-1985 '85 致敬, 2005-1985* (A tribute to '85, 2005-1985). Wuhan: Hubei Fine Arts Publishing House, 2005. 313-324.

Zha Changping 查常平. “Duomeijie de shuimo shiyan” 多媒介的水墨实验 (Multimedia experiments in ink). In *Humanistic Memory of Contemporary Art I* 当代艺术的人文追思. Nanning: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2008. 62-70.

Zha Changping 查常平. “Changjing: meicai yu guannian” 场景: 媒材与观念 (Scene: media and concepts). In *Humanistic Memory of Contemporary Art I* 当代艺术的人文追思. Nanning: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2008. 195-205.

Zha Changping 查常平. “Dai Guangyu de 'poshanshui'” 戴光郁的“破山水” (Dai Guangyu's 'broken landscapes'). In *World Aesthetic Relationnelle* 世界关系美学. Shanghai: Sanlian Books, 2017. 78-83.

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Art Worm 艺术虫, Dai Guangyu 戴光郁. “Dangdai meishu de jianzhengzhe zhi Dai Guangyu” 当代美术的见证者之戴光郁 (Dai Guangyu as a witness of contemporary art). *Art Worm* 艺术虫 27 (2017). 66-79.

The Beijinger 北京客, Dai Guangyu 戴光郁. "Beijingke Dai Guangyu fangtai" 北京客" 戴光郁访谈 (The *Beijinger* interviews Dai Guangyu). *The Beijinger 1 – 38 Walking Heroes of China's New Art* 北京客 1 ——行走中国新艺术江湖的 38 条好汉. Beijing: Beijing Culture and Art Press, 2013. 252-257.

Hu Shaojie 胡少杰, Dai Guangyu 戴光郁. "Dai Guangyu de jiazhi" 戴光郁的价值 (Dai Guangyu's value). *Man Art* 漫艺术 6/7 (2016). 74-85.

Li Xuhui 李旭辉, Dai Guangyu 戴光郁. "Xinrenwen Xinshuimo" 新人文新水墨 (New humanism, new ink). *Ku Art* 库艺术, February 2011. 54-61.

Li Xuhui 李旭辉, Dai Guangyu 戴光郁. "Shuimo jiangou yu wenhua shengcheng jingshen jingxiang – Li Xuhui duihua Dai Guangyu" 水墨建构与文化生成精神镜像——李旭辉对话戴光郁 (The construction of ink and the spiritual image of cultural formation – Li Xuhui in conversation with Dai Guangyu). *Art Worm* 艺术虫 11 (2012). 48-55.

Liu Chun 刘淳, Dai Guangyu 戴光郁. "Woyao zai chuantong wenhua zhong faxian he wajue xinde wenti" 我要在传统文化中发现和挖掘新的问题 (I want to discover and excavate new issues in traditional culture). In *Art • Life • Fashion / Dialogue with Forty-one Chinese Contemporary Artists* 艺术 • 人生 • 新潮 / 与四十一位中国当代艺术家对话. Kunming: Yunnan People's Publishing House, 2013. 316-325.

Yu Haiyuan 于海元, Dai Guangyu 戴光郁. "Resistance" 抵抗 Water+Ink: The modern transformation of ink from the Asia perspective 水加墨: 亚洲视野下的水墨现代性转化. Jiangxi Fine Arts Publishing House, 2017. 164-173.

Song Lin 宋琳, Dai Guangyu 戴光郁. "Yu qiandade shehuijingguan duijue" 与结构强大的社会景观对决 (Confronting a powerful social landscape). *Reading Poems* 读诗 1/2 (2017). 233-240.

Xu Jialing 徐家玲, Dai Guangyu 戴光郁. "Shinian wo keyihe yishuquan baochi yizhong juli – Xu Jialing duihua Dai Guangyu" 十年我刻意和艺术圈保持一种距离——徐家玲对话戴光郁 (In ten years I have deliberately kept a distance from the art world – Xu Jialing in conversation with Dai Guangyu). *Man Art* 漫艺术, November 2015. 36-47.

Zha Changping 查常平, Dai Guangyu 戴光郁. "Shuimo dangdai tujing yu jingshen tuwei" 水墨当代图景与精神突围 (The state of contemporary ink and conceptual breakthrough). *New Ink Painting II* 新水墨下. Nanchang: Jiangxi Fine Arts Publishing House, 2013. 116-119.



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