

序 言

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田畑幸人和冯博一先生嘱我为这个展览写序，我欣然承诺。因为在我看来，这个展览关系到三件事，都非常有意义，值得一书。

第一，这个展览是日本东京画廊实行“北京东京艺术工程”的首次展览，为这个工程揭开帷幕。虽然现在还无法估计这一计划的将来进展，但值得注意的是由于东京画廊的特殊背景，这个计划对中国当代艺术甚至亚洲当代艺术的发展有着不寻常的意义。东京画廊在二战后成立，在其后的几十年中支持了大量前卫艺术家，与日本当代艺术的发展息息相关。中国的实验艺术的展开要晚三十余年，但在过去十年中迅速成熟，成为世界当代艺术的一个重要组成部分。日本战后的艺术发展和中国文化革命后的艺术发展之间有着很耐人寻味的平行关系，都面临着如何在一个根本性的历史转折中重新发现自身个性和全球性的双重挑战，更具体的说也就是如何发展一种既是亚洲又是世界的艺术。在实验艺术出现以前，中国艺术全球化的过程基本是以东西二元论（east-west dichotomy）为基础的，因此有“西画”、“国画”之分，非此即彼。种种讨论也常常在“民族化”、“土洋结合”等问题上纠缠不清。实验艺术断然放弃了这种二元立场，从一开始就是世界性的，但从一开始也绝对容纳传统的和民族的观念和形式，所追求的“前卫性”因此既是本土的前卫也是世界的前卫。我想，在这一点上，中国和日本两种文化对当代艺术的理解有着特殊的共同背景和共识，所进行的交流也就可以更为深入。

第二，这个展览的空间是东京画廊在北京开发、重新使用的一个旧厂房，是50年代初苏联对中国的一项援助，由原东德建造的一个电子工厂的一部分（这其中的复杂国际关系也是颇有兴味的一个问题）。我在随同田畑幸人和冯博一先生一行去参观的时候，空荡零落的厂房还没有重新装修，墙上文革标语罩满灰尘。漫步其中，很有凭吊遗迹的感觉。几个月后收到画廊装修之后的照片，标语尚在，但已被有意识地化为“现在”和“将来”的一部分。这种对于“过去”的使用在国际建筑中不是新鲜事情：且不说巴黎和纽约这样的世界大都市，就是一些名不见经传的中小国家和城市也把对传统建筑的改造使用当成城市持续发展的一项基本方向和手段，特别是对于艺术场所，“过去”痕迹的存在为当代审美提供了历史深度。

值得注意的是，这种做法虽然似乎顺理成章、不言而喻，但却与在中国曾经流行一时，至今仍大有威力的“不破不立”的革命哲学相对立。这里需要说明的是“革命”并非是现代马列主义的创造，而是来源于中国古代的天命观，意思是在改朝换代的时候，新的政权要“革”掉前面政权的“命”——实在是一种很杀气腾腾的暴力哲学。实施到视觉文化中来，就是要在各种名义下系统地摧毁、抹杀前代的视觉符号，包括建筑、雕刻、绘画等等。检索历史，这种情况屡见不鲜。有时不便把整个建筑群（如北京的紫禁城）完全拆掉，那就要重绘所有彩画，重新命名所有建筑，以示“革命”之意，如清朝开国者所为。中国虽然考古文物丰富，但大都出自地下，地上的真正古老建筑就少得与这个国

家的漫长历史不成比例。我很怀疑这是历代的“文化革命”以及这种政治哲学在一般文化心态中几千年以来深厚影响的结果。北京在20世纪的命运可说是“不破不立”观念的最好证明：不但一些重要历史建筑（如城墙和城楼）早已被有组织有计划的“革”掉，再也不可挽回；而且直至今，对过去建筑的利用仍然只是限制在文化古迹和旅游重点这类特殊区域。大约仍是装潢门面，与当地居民自身的文化关系不大。真正与生活、历史有关的建筑就被大片大片、毫不可惜地拆除了，代之以拙劣的商品房、写字楼之类。何时我们的国人真的能珍惜自己的历史呢？自50年代以来，一些知识分子、建筑师不断为此呼吁。但事实也证明，单纯这种呼吁是无济于事的，更有希望的可能是真正地作出一些范例，对过去和“无用”的建筑进行改造性使用，通过这些实验逐渐建设中国文化和思想中的历史延续性。因此，这也是我对“北京东京艺术工程”感兴趣的另一个原因。

第三，以“北京‘浮世绘’”为主题，冯博一先生策划的这个展览着眼于北京的当代“风俗”（按：“浮世绘”也可以直译为“风俗画”）。回顾一下中国实验艺术的发展，可以说自90年代初的“新生代”绘画以来，与城市的互动就成了艺术实验的一个重要主题。“新生代”艺术家一反以往的革命现实主义，以熟练的油画技法着意描绘都市生活中无所不在的琐碎场景，以芸芸众生取代高大英雄，以非文学性代替宏伟叙事，以艺术家的个人敏感观察取代集体创作的风格样式。90年代中、后期实验艺术中对城市的表现有了更重要的突破。一方面，艺术家大量使用各种非绘画手段，如装置、行为和影像等等，使他们的“城市艺术”脱离了学院艺术的范围，更为直接和有力。另一方面，观念艺术的盛行使实验艺术家更注意自身的参与，摆脱了把城市和城市生活作为“客观现实”来描绘的做法。这种参与不但显示在作品的创意和设计上，也反映在作品的社会功能、展示方法等诸多方面。到了90年代末，很多艺术品把使用和转换城市公共空间作为实验目的，大大扩展了新兴“城市艺术”的范围和包容度。

值得注意的是，独立策展人和艺术家组织的“实验性展览”在这个时期内成为中国实验艺术中的一个重要现象。由于这种展览所“实验”的对象不仅是展出作品的风格，而更主要的是展览本身的社会性及与观众的互动，展览场地就成为策展人的一项重要考虑。从策划1998年的“生存痕迹”展开始，冯博一先生就一直是在这种“实验性展览”的重要组织者和推动者。“生存痕迹”的核心概念是变化中的“城乡之际”这样一种特殊空间。他和华天雪于2001年12月所策划的“知识就是力量”，希望通过在西单图书城展示“书籍艺术”而使实验艺术参与公共生活。这次的“北京‘浮世绘’”，是他在一个新装修的老厂房中组织的一个以城市变迁为题材的展览，同样反映了这种对展览场地和展览内容关系的考虑。

2002年8月于芝加哥

Preface

Wu Hung

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When Mr. Yukihiro Tabata and Mr. Feng Boyi called on me to write a preface for this exhibition, I gladly agreed. I did so because in my eyes, this exhibition connects with three important things, all of which are very meaningful and worth thinking about.

First of all, this exhibition marks the beginning of the Beijing Tokyo Art Projects sponsored by Tokyo Gallery. Although there is no way at present to gauge the future evolution of this project, it is worthwhile to note that owing to the special background of the Tokyo Gallery, the project should have special significance for the development of Chinese and even Asian contemporary art. Tokyo Gallery was established shortly after the Second World War. In the decades that followed, it has given considerable support to avant-garde art, and been closely linked with the development of contemporary art in Japan. Chinese experimental art began to develop more than thirty years later, but in the last decade, it has matured rapidly, becoming an important part of contemporary art worldwide. The relationship between the development of contemporary art in post-war Japan and that in China after the Cultural Revolution offers food for thought: both were facing the question of how-amidst a fundamental turn in the course of history-they might re-discover the twin challenges of individuality and globality. To put it more concretely, both were looking to develop a kind of art at once Asian and international. Before the emergence of experimental art, the globalization process for Chinese art was based on, and fundamentally structured by, the east-west dichotomy. We see this consciousness in the distinction between *xibua* and *guobua* (“western painting” and “national painting”); if not one, then the other. Many debates in Chinese art history often get hung up on questions of “sinicization” and “combining domestic and foreign.” Global from its outset, experimental art firmly sets aside this binary perspective. Nonetheless, experimental art retains an ability to utilize and incorporate traditional concepts and forms, rendering the “avant-gardeness” which it seeks at once local and global. I believe that in terms of cultural understanding of contemporary art, China and Japan share particularly similar historical backgrounds and public perceptions, and thus exchange between them can be particularly meaningful.

Second, this exhibition space developed by Tokyo Gallery re-uses an old factory that was built in the early 1950s with Soviet aid and East German technology. This space and its surrounding environs were once part of a massive factory complex producing electronic goods (the complicated international relationship involved here is itself an interesting issue.) When I went to visit the space with Yukihiro Tabata and Feng Boyi, it was empty and deserted, still awaiting renovation. A Cultural Revolution slogan was visible on the wall, covered with dust. Walking slowly through the place, I felt transported in time. Later when I received pictures of the restored space in the mail a few months later, this slogan from “the past” was still intact, consciously preserved in the space’s “present” and “future.” Appropriation of “the past” is nothing new in international architecture. Not only world metropolises like Paris and New York, but small and mid-sized cities all over the world turn their physical past into a direction and tactic for future development. Especially in art-related spaces, traces of “the past” add historical depth to a contemporary aesthetic.

It is worth noting that this tactic, while following a rational, self-evident line of thought, has only begun to be accepted in China very recently. Throughout its history, China has espoused a revolutionary philosophy of “no construction without destruction.” “Revolution” in this sense is not just the province

of modern Marxism-Leninism, but comes from China's ancient conception of the "mandate of heaven." (The Chinese word for revolution, *geming*, comprises the character for "eliminate" or "abolish" followed by that for "mandate" or "fate.") Each time a new dynasty came to power, there was quite literally a "change of mandate," and the most pressing task facing a new sovereign was to remove all traces of the previous mandate. This is actually quite a violent political philosophy. Put into practice by the visual culture, this philosophic principle supports the systematic physical destruction of the visual symbols left behind by a previous social order, including architecture, engravings, paintings, etc. Looking back over China's history, this phenomenon is a common occurrence. At times it is not feasible to completely destroy an entire architectural complex (as in the case of the Forbidden City), so it is simply repainted and renamed in line with the new order and its "change of mandate." Although China has a rich collection of archaeological artifacts, they have nearly all been dug up from below ground; the number of extant aboveground ancient buildings hardly compares with China's extremely long history. I suspect that this is a result of each dynasty's "cultural revolution" and of the deep influence of this political philosophy on the cultural psychology of China's people.

The fate of Beijing in the twentieth century is the best proof of this "no construction without destruction" concept. Not only were historical structures such as the city wall "eliminated" long ago in a planned and organized campaign, unable to be restored; but even today, Beijing's use of historical architecture is limited to the special areas of historical and tourist sites. These are brightly decorated facades, buildings that never had much relevance to the culture of the local residents. The truly historical architecture has been destroyed *en masse*, replaced by crude storefronts and offices. "When will the people of our country truly come to cherish their history?" Since the 1950s, intellectuals and architects have been asking this question. But reality shows this sort of innocent appeal to be of little use. More feasible, perhaps, is to make a few places into examples, to put old, "useless" architecture into modified use, and through such experiments to gradually build a kind of permanence for Chinese culture and thought. This is another thing that interests me about the Beijing Tokyo Art Projects.

Third, themed *Beijing Afloat*, this exhibition has been curated by Mr. Feng Boyi with an eye to the "social customs" of contemporary Beijing. ("Afloat" is a concise English rendering of *Ukiyo-e*, a school of Japanese print-making, which could be directly translated as "pictures of the floating world," or "custom painting.") Looking back on the development of experimental art in Beijing, one could say that since the "New Generation" painters of the early 1990s, interaction with the city has been a major theme. When the "New Generation" rebelled against the conventions of revolutionary realism, they began to use their skilled painting techniques to depict the omnipresent everyday scenes of the city, replacing great heroes with the people and creatures of ordinary life, grandiose narratives with non-literary ones, and the ethic of collective creation with their own personal observations and sensibilities. In the mid-1990s, later experimental art had a more important breakthrough in terms of representing the city. On the one hand, artists used all sorts of non-painting tactics - installation, performance, etc. - to make their "urban art" break the confines of academic art, rendering it more direct and powerful. On the other hand, the maturation of conceptual art made experimental artists more mindful of their participation in their own works, ending the sort of artistic praxis whereby the city and city life could serve as "objective reality." This participation is evident not only in the originality and design of these later works, but is reflected

also in the works' social power, method of display, and elsewhere. By the late 1990s, the experimental goals of many works involved appropriating or altering the public spaces of the city. In this way, the scope and inclusiveness of the burgeoning "urban art" movement was drastically widened.

It is worth noting that so-called "experimental exhibitions" organized by independent curators and artists are an important phenomenon at this moment in Chinese experimental art. Because this "experimentation" has not only to do with the nature of the works on display, but the exhibition's overall social nature and relationship to its viewers, the question of where to hold an exhibition becomes an important consideration. Since he curated *Trace of Existence* in 1998, Mr. Feng Boyi has continuously served as a major organizer and promoter of this sort of experimental exhibition. The core concept behind *Trace of Existence* was the special space at the constantly changing "boundary between urban and rural." The exhibition that he curated with Hua Tianxue in December, 2001, entitled *Knowledge is Power*, looked to insert experimental art into public life by displaying "book art" at the Xidan Bookstore, the largest in Beijing. In the current *Beijing Afloat*, he uses a newly restored space of an old factory as the site for an exhibition that looks at a Beijing similarly in flux. Like Feng Boyi's earlier exhibitions, *Beijing Afloat* reflects the curator's consideration of the connection between the substance of the works on exhibit and the space in which they are exhibited.

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Translation by Philip Tinari