



蔡佳葳
Charwei Tsai
Born 1980
Bonsai Series III - no. VII, 2011
black ink on lithographs, 26 x 31 cm

INK REMIX



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INK REMIX

CONTEMPORARY ART
FROM MAINLAND CHINA, TAIWAN AND HONG KONG

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Charwei Tsai explores spiritual and environmental themes through a variety of media including videos, photographs, installation and performance based works. Charwei often uses calligraphy to explore Buddhist texts on a range of natural surfaces such as tofu, tree trunks, mushrooms and ice. Through a detailed and repetitive process she reaches a meditative state. The ink and brush are not merely tools – they are a means by which the artist further develops her spiritual and social practice.¹ Often her works are transient; the materials decaying or disintegrating over time. Documentation of this ephemeral work is undertaken using photography or video. Charwei is also an accomplished printmaker utilising lithography, a method which also lends itself to a meditative process because it requires the artist to work directly and confidently, with few options to revise their work.

ARTIST STATEMENT

People often ask me if I am a devoted religious artist or simply in love with the aesthetics of writing texts. Although I have always almost single-mindedly tried to explore one theme that is the Buddhist concept of *emptiness*, I never thought of myself as a religious artist. I always considered *emptiness* as a philosophical concept. In my daily life I am still trying to grasp this concept.

*Form is emptiness, emptiness is form
Emptiness is not separate from form,
Form is not separate from emptiness.*

Excerpt from the Heart Sutra

My work is a meditation on these words. When I write repeatedly on objects, it is my own internal contemplative process that I consider as my practice. My aim was never to illustrate or produce a physical work that explains to others the concept of *emptiness*. My own understanding of the concept is still rudimentary and I am constantly learning.⁴

ABOUT THE WORK

In *Bonsai Series III*, the artist carefully inscribes the lyrics of a love song written by the sixth Dalai Lama onto a series of lithographic prints depicting Bonsai trees. The practice of cultivating these miniature trees is associated with traditional Chinese concepts of beauty, contemplation and self-cultivation but in this series the artist critiques these ideas and questions the relationship between humans, nature and the universe.⁵

In Charwei's description of the series she states, 'lyrics of love songs that I grew up listening to in Taiwan on love and loneliness are written on lithographs of bonsais, which are trees that are manipulated and dwarfed for a sense of beauty'.⁶

蔡佳蕙 Charwei Tsai

Born 1980

Bonsai Series III – no. VII, 2011
black ink on lithographs, 26 x 31 cm

Born in Taiwan, Charwei was educated overseas, and she currently lives between Taipei, Taiwan and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She is fascinated by concepts of impermanence and emptiness, which are central to Buddhist belief, and which the artist defines as an 'understanding of the interdependence between oneself and the universe, and the transient nature of this relationship'.² These concepts are core to the Heart Sutra, a significant Buddhist text often used by Charwei.

In her *Mantra* series, Charwei inscribes excerpts from the Heart Sutra onto common, perishable organic materials. The time-lapse videos, *Tofu Mantra* 2005 and *Incense Mantra* 2013, visually record the process of decay and destruction of text, which become powerful visual metaphors for the impermanence of existence.³

DISCUSSION

- 1 The artist has created lithographic prints of Bonsai trees. Can you see what the artist has included on the tree in place of leaves?
- 2 The words are the lyrics of love songs by the sixth Dalai Lama. Why do you think the artist chose to depict the Bonsai trees with these lyrics?
- 3 Do you think the work has a spiritual, philosophical or religious connotation? Why?
- 4 How did the artist give the work a sense of time and also of movement?
- 5 The colour palette of the work is minimal. Why do you think Charwei decided to do this? What mood or feeling do you think it gives the work?

ACTIVITIES

Thinking

- **Compare** the *Bonsai Series III* works with the *Tofu Mantra*. In what ways are the works similar? How are they different? Both works include calligraphy written on objects, how does the decay of the tofu in the video compare with the unchanging nature of the *Bonsai Series III*?

- **Analyse** the following quote from the Heart Sutra:

*Form is emptiness, emptiness is form
Emptiness is not separate from form,
Form is not separate from emptiness.*

Charwei argues that, 'the state of emptiness is an understanding of the interdependence between oneself and the universe, and the transient nature of this relationship...For example, to be attached to the beauty of a blossoming flower may cause suffering if one is not aware that the physical form of the flower is constantly changing and that the flower will eventually wither and die. On the other hand, if one understands the ephemeral as a necessary condition of the flower's being then as one observes the same phenomenon of a flower withering, one is relieved from the unnecessary suffering that arises from an attachment to its temporal state of beauty'.⁷

How are these ideas expressed in her work?

- **Discuss** other artists who explore ideas through work that is ephemeral. For example, Andy Goldsworthy and Christo and Jeanne-Claude. Does ephemeral art need to have an environmental element?
- **Investigate** Charwei's approach to art as a meditation. She is not religious but she describes her work as a 'meditation' on the words from the Heart Sutra. Another example of making art as a form of meditation is Buddhist Sand Mandalas. Are the results of works of art with a mediative process less important than the process of making them?
- **Look at** the works in the *Bonsai Series III* and understand the process of making them – research other artists who use lithography, for example, Honoré Daumier and Judy Watson.
- **Consider** other artists who use text in their art such as Jenny Holzer and Jasper Johns. Why do artists choose to include text in their art? What does this add to their works?

Making

- **Analyse** a poem or song. Identify an object that relates to the words or message. Create a print with text from the poem or song on that object.

GLOSSARY

Lithograph	a print made by drawing on limestone or a metal plate with wax crayons, applying ink onto the stone and printing the image onto paper.
Sutras	Buddhist texts seeking to express a principle or observation. The <i>Heart Sutra</i> is one of the most sacred texts of Mahayana Buddhism. The text is chanted, studied and meditated upon by practitioners in an effort to attain 'perfect wisdom'. The text offers insight into the Buddhist concept of emptiness, and the union of compassion and wisdom. ⁸
Bonsai	a Japanese art form of growing miniature trees in containers. The art originated in mainland China, where it is called penjing.
Mantra	a word or sound repeated to assist with concentration during meditation.
The sixth Dalai Lama	Tsangyang Gyatso (1683-1706) was a controversial figure; in opposition to Buddhist teachings he drank alcohol and enjoyed the company of women. He wrote a series of poems and love songs, some of which are still popular today. ⁹
Ephemeral	not lasting long, fleeting.
Calligraphy	the art of beautiful hand writing.
Meditation	a discipline that involves turning the mind and attention inward and focusing on a single thought, image, object or feeling. ¹⁰

¹ Glenis Israel. 2013. *Artwise Visual Arts 7-10 for the Australian Curriculum*. Milton, John Wiley & Sons Australia Ltd.

² Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.

³ Ibid

⁴ Charwei Tsai. 2014. *Statement*. Accessed 2015 on: <http://charwei.com/texts/>.

⁵ Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.

⁶ Charwei Tsai. No date. *Bonsai Series, 2011, Lithos*. Accessed 2015 on: <http://charwei.com/projects/bonsai-series-lithos/>.

⁷ Charwei Tsai. 2009. *Mushroom Mantra, 2005, Installation*. Accessed 2015 on: <http://charwei.com/projects/mushroom-mantra-2005/>.

⁸ Gyatso, Tenzin; the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. 2005. *Essence of the Heart Sutra*. Wisdom Publications, Boston. Accessed 2015 on: <http://www.wisdompubs.org/sites/default/files/preview/Essence%20of%20the%20Heart%20Sutra%20Book%20Preview.pdf>

⁹ BBC News. 2005. *Erotic verse sheds light on 'playboy Lama'*. Accessed 2015 on: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4073630.stm>

¹⁰ Australian Teachers of Meditation Association. 2014. Accessed 2015 on: http://meditationaustralia.org.au/?page_id=12



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FROM MAINLAND CHINA, TAIWAN AND HONG KONG

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Yao Jui-chung is one of Taiwan's most significant contemporary artists, in addition to his work as a teacher and writer. He works across a wide range of media including painting, drawing, photography, video, performance and installation art. The artist was born in 1969 in Taipei, Taiwan and grew up during the post-martial law period in Taiwan, when artists enjoyed unprecedented freedoms. During this period there was a focus on defining Taiwanese national identity and artists considered ideas from both mainland China and the west.² His practice is conceptual and political; he explores issues ranging from Taiwan's identity and its relationship to mainland China to post-colonialism and globalisation.³ His works are often humorous and examine the 'absurdity of the human condition'.⁴ Yao's work offers a critical counter-point to official narratives about national identity.⁵

ABOUT THE WORK

The artist chooses not to employ materials associated with traditional Chinese painting, such as the brush and rice paper and instead uses biro and a fine point oil pen on handmade paper embellished with glitter and gold.¹⁰ In Chinese culture, gold is a signifier of prosperity, and Yao uses gold leaf to fill the empty spaces of his compositions and to achieve a flattening effect. There is a strong autobiographical element to many of his works, and in *Yao's Journey to Australia*, he envisions himself as a Buddhist disciple sitting cross-legged in the middle of a map of Australia, meditating on his forthcoming journey.¹¹

姚瑞中 Yao Jui-chung Born 1969

Yao's Journey to Australia, 2015
biro, blue ink with gold leaf
on India handmade paper, 195 x 539 cm

Yao creates works on paper appropriating traditional Chinese landscape (*shanshui*) painting, which he describes as 'pseudo landscapes'.⁶ From the internet Yao sources and combines images by famous Chinese landscape painters, including Shi Tao (石涛, 1642-1707) and Dong Qichang (董其昌, 1555-1636). He then re-interprets these images by inserting his personal history transforming grand narratives into trivial and individual ones.⁷⁻⁸ The practice of copying or imitating other artists' works is central to traditional Chinese art, and Yao explores this idea in a postmodernist context, to question, subvert and parody notions of authenticity and authority, what he describes as the 'hegemony of Chinese culture'.⁹

Yao's Journey to Australia, 2015 [details]



¹ Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.

² Wang Powei. 2013. *From Art to Culture: How Yao Jui-chung Opens up Long Live/ Landscape*. Accessed 2015 on: http://www.yaojuichung.com/pdf/cn/from_art_to_culture_how_yao_juichung_opens_up_long_live_landscape.pdf.

³ Yao Jui-chung, No date. *Biography*. Accessed 2015 on: <http://www.yaojuichung.com/htdocs/?page=bio>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.

⁶ Yao Jui-chung. 2012. *Yao Jui-chung's Long Live/Landscape*. Tina Keng Gallery.

⁷ Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.

⁸ Yao Jui-chung, No date. *Biography*. Accessed 2015 on: <http://www.yaojuichung.com/htdocs/?page=bio>

⁹ Yao Jui-chung. 2012. *Yao Jui-chung's Long Live/Landscape*. Tina Keng Gallery.

¹⁰ Feng Boyi. 2012. *Everything solid dissolves into the ether: On Yao Jui-chung's Long Live/Landscape*. Tina Keng Gallery.

¹¹ Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.

¹² Glenis Israel. 2013. *Artwise Visual Arts 7-10* for the Australian Curriculum. Milton, John Wiley & Sons Australia Ltd.

¹³ Glenis Israel. 1997. *Artwise Visual Arts 7-10*. Milton, John Wiley & Sons Australia Ltd.

DISCUSSION

1. The artist created this work especially for this exhibition. He illustrates his anticipation of the journey to Australia. What can you recognise in the circular scenes? Do you think they represent an accurate overview of our nation? What other scenes could be used to represent Australia?
2. Look closely at the work and see if you can tell which materials the artist has used. Why is this surprising?
3. Colours are deeply symbolic in Chinese culture. Gold is a signifier of prosperity, nobility and wealth. What other colours are important in Chinese culture? What are some other examples of meanings ascribed to colours in Eastern and Western cultures?
4. Does the mountainous landscape depicted in the background of the work look familiar to you? What words would you use to describe this kind of landscape? Where have you seen paintings or images like this before?
5. Yao's work is often referred to as humorous or 'tongue in cheek'. Do you think this is the case with *Yao's Journey to Australia*? Why/why not?

ACTIVITIES

Thinking

- Humour in art can often be an effective way of making a serious statement. **Analyse** Yao's use of humour more closely in his other artworks. What do you think Yao is saying?
- Think about, and then **discuss** as a class, what is often considered as an iconic Australian scene. What are some examples of artworks that reference these images or ideas? How do these ideas of nationality differ depending on who is the artist?
- **Consider** the principle that 'copying or imitating other artists' works is central to traditional Chinese art'. Look at some other examples of Yao's works on paper which draw inspiration from classic Chinese landscape paintings. How do his works reinvent the idea of ink art?
- **Investigate** the post-martial law period in Taiwan and what this meant for artists practising at the time.
- **Look at** other artists who have worked with biro, for example, Laith McGregor. Examine the development of ballpoint pen art in the twentieth century. Consider what each artist's intention might be in choosing to use this medium.
- **Compare** the works of two influential artists from the 'Great Age of Chinese landscape' (907-1127). Choose an artist from the north, such as Li Cheng or Fan Kuan, and an artist from the south, such as Dong Yuan or Juran.

Making

- **Imagine** a journey that you one day wish to take. Using *Yao's Journey to Australia* as inspiration, in your chosen medium create a work on paper that references your expectations and understanding of that place. Place yourself in the image.

GLOSSARY

Narrative	story or sequence of events.
Postmodern	a widely used term for unconventional art starting around the 1980s. It generally challenges the traditions of art and may involve appropriation and technology or may draw on mixed art traditions. ¹²
Composition	the placement of figures and objects; the organisation of an art work.
Appropriate	to borrow an historical work or images from popular culture and change its context to use for another purpose, or in a new, interesting way. ¹³
Parody	a humorous imitation or send up of something.
Hegemony	leadership or dominance, especially by one country or social group over others.





彭薇

Peng Wei

Born 1974

Winter Mountain, 2011

Sergio Rossi boots and rice paper

60 x 25 x 30 cm

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

*I have never attempted to be traditional or contemporary. I haven't made any kind of choice.*¹

Peng Wei is one of the few female artists in mainland China who has forged a successful artistic career in the male-dominated and competitive field of contemporary ink art. She paints and produces mixed media works described as 'ready-mades' which explore the confluence between the past and present.² Her intricate renderings of traditional literati paintings detailing pagodas, landscapes, trees, portraits and other decorative motifs appear upon a variety of fashion-related items, such as busts, boots, robes and fans. Her mixed-media works address the role of tradition in society. Her work with clothing and shoes can also be read as delving into themes of embodiment, femininity, and history.³

ABOUT THE WORK

Peng selectively employs traditional Chinese techniques, materials, and motifs in works like *Night* and *Winter Mountain*. However, these traditional techniques are applied to unconventional objects, including Sergio Rossi boots and mannequins. The items, which are associated with notions of femininity and beauty, are symbolically stripped of their function and are re-fashioned into contemporary art objects.⁷

Peng's work, *Night*, was created by wrapping a plastic mannequin with *xuan* (rice) paper which was then peeled off to reveal a hollow female figure. The *xuan* paper has an inherent beauty and lightness.⁸ The work is sculptural, rather than a two-dimensional painting, with volume and the suggestion of the female figure.

Winter Mountain is from a series of hand-painted rice paper boots created in collaboration with renowned Italian shoe brand Sergio Rossi. The boots are not designed to be worn, creating a contradiction between the appearance and their purpose as contemporary art objects. Like the series of mannequins, Peng has painted traditional Chinese painting motifs on Rossi's signature Chelsea Boot.

彭 薇 Peng Wei

Born 1974

Winter Mountain, 2011

Sergio Rossi boots and rice paper
60 x 25 x 30 cm

Peng's works are inspired by classical Chinese painting motifs, forms and patterns, but she has an ambivalent attitude towards the deeply entrenched moral codes and principles of traditional Chinese painting.⁴ According to the artist, the past informs the present, and her objective is to freely explore and develop an approach that is not oriented towards a particular style or genre. She seeks to combine traditional, modernist and postmodernist influences so that 'the old and new can become reconciled'.⁵ Peng's experiments reject western concepts of innovation and originality through her imitation of traditional Chinese painting, she observes 'I don't have a boundary between the traditional and the contemporary. I don't have this definition. For me, the question is, what approach is best or what can best help me arrive at my destination?'.⁶



Night, 2010
bust with rice paper, 53 x 30 x 22 cm

DISCUSSION

1. Peng painted on *xuan* paper, or rice paper, to create *Winter Mountain* and *Night*. What quality does this lend to the works? Why might she have chosen to work with this particular material?
2. Look closely at *Night*. How do you think Peng created this sculptural form?
3. Describe the landscapes depicted in these works. Can you find some classical Chinese painting motifs?
4. Peng collaborated with renowned Italian shoe brand Sergio Rossi, to create ten editions of hand-painted rice paper boots. Can you think of any other examples of collaborations between visual artists and brands? Or artists more broadly, such as musicians or actors, and brands? How successful do you think they were?
5. Peng often uses a variety of fashion related items when creating her works. What do you think this suggests about the artist's intentions?

ACTIVITIES

Thinking

- Peng argues 'contemporariness has a different meaning for every person...[for me] it is about self-expression...Once a work is complete it belongs to the past – the present is the process'.⁹ **Discuss** the concept of contemporary art, and why this term can sometimes be problematic.
- Peng describes her mixed media works as 'ready-mades'. **Research** what this term refers to? In what way was this an influential concept in twentieth century Western art?
- **Look at** examples of Peng's other works in the *Body Series* 2007-2011 and discuss the various traditional literati motifs that are represented. In what ways does she subvert what initially appear as traditional works?
- **Consider** the statement 'Contemporary art in China is a man's world'. Begin by reading the 2008 *New York Times* article, 'China's female artists quietly emerge', then research further to find evidence as to whether this statement is still accurate or not. Suggest some reasons why you think this is the case.
- **Compare** Peng's work with another female Chinese contemporary artist. How are their messages or intentions similar – or different?
- **Analyse** the ideas inherent in the curator's statement: 'Peng Wei deconstructs, re-interprets and feminises the Chinese landscape painting traditions'.

Making

- **Inspired** by Peng's process, use a found object and wrap, plaster or cover the form in your choice of material. Strip the material carefully from the found object retaining its form, and paint this new aesthetic form, creating a work that no longer has any 'useful' function.

GLOSSARY

Contemporary art	current, offering a fresh perspective and point of view, and often employing new techniques and new media. ¹⁰
Literati painting	a term to describe brush and ink paintings of amateurs during the Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1271-1368) dynasties. Painting was not the primary source of income for these scholars, they were often politicians or civil servants. The paintings generally depict natural scenes. ¹¹
Motif	a distinct element or image.
Xuan paper	(rice paper) is a special paper made with sandalwood and bamboo pulp used in most Chinese calligraphy and painting works. It is characterised by its pure white colour, fine texture, softness, lustre and strong absorption. ¹²
Form	shape or solidness, having three dimensions.

¹ Peng Wei. 2013. *Peng Wei's Work – I seek a balance between the past and the present: A conversation with Swiss Collector Uli Sigg*. Ting Keng Gallery.
² Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.
³ Wikipedia. 2015. *Peng Wei*. Accessed 2015 on: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peng_Wei
⁴ For an example of such principles, see Richard R Wertz. 1998-2011. *The arts – painting – theory*. Accessed 2015 on <http://www.ibiblio.org/chineseculture/contents/arts/p-arts-c01s03.html>
⁵ Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.
⁶ Peng Wei. 2013. *Peng Wei's Work – I seek a balance between the past and the present: A conversation with Swiss Collector Uli Sigg*. Ting Keng Gallery.
⁷ Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.
⁸ Chen Danqing. No date. *Body Series* 2007-2011. Accessed 2015 on: <http://www.pengwei.info/?p=1076>
⁹ Peng Wei in Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.
¹⁰ Kathryn Wells and Jo Daniell. 2012. *Contemporary Australian Art*. Accessed 2015 on: <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/contemporary-austn-art>
¹¹ Asian Brushpainter. 2012. *Knowledge Base - Cultural Sources of Ink and Wash / Sumi-e Painting: Literati Painting*. Accessed 2015 on: <http://www.asianbrushpainter.com/blog/knowledgebase/literati-painting/>
¹² Cultural China. No Date. *Kaleidoscope – Xuan Paper*. Accessed 2015 on: <http://www.cultural-china.com/chinaWH/html/en/Kaleidoscope3bye11.html>





倪有鱼

Ni Youyu

Born 1984

Galaxy 2012-2015, 2014-2015

painted coins, size variable x 80 (approx.) [detail]

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Shanghai-based artist Ni Youyu, is one of a younger generation of Chinese artists who are re-discovering the significance of their long history of Chinese cultural tradition and re-interpreting this within both a contemporary and global context. Ni has studied Western modern art along with the ancient techniques and traditions of Chinese ink painting. He is particularly attracted to the Chinese landscape (*shanshui*) paintings from the Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1271-1368) dynasties, which continue to inspire his work.¹

Ni believes strongly that artists today can learn from the past in the same way the many generations of artists before them have done. He rejects any narrow conceptions of contemporary art which focus exclusively on 'the new', seeking to emphasise innovation and originality without careful consideration of the past. He states 'there is no

ABOUT THE WORK

In his work *Galaxy 2012-2015*, Ni has pounded hundreds of small coins, and then painted them with meticulously executed miniature scenes including waterfalls, mountains, temples and trees inspired by Chinese painting traditions from the past, using a writing brush and magnifying glass.⁴ Through this process Ni has erased the currency's previous surface in order to create a new one; still, however, acknowledging the painting traditions and artists that have come before him. Ni's process imbues the work with a kind of rhythm as the artist poetically erases 'the old' in order to present 'the new', which is in turn informed by 'the old' again.

The choice of placement of Ni's repurposed currency on the gallery wall is based on a star chart, drawing inspiration from Chinese Cosmology, the ancient tradition of studying the stars. In Chinese, the word 'galaxy' can be translated as 'silver river' (*yin he*), and the adverb 'pound money' (*za qian*) can also refer to a businessman who recklessly spends money to make a quick profit. In this work Ni extends his critique of contemporary art to question the value accorded to art in the increasingly commercialised art world.⁵

倪有鱼 Ni Youyu

Born 1984

Galaxy 2012-2015, 2014-2015

painted coins, size variable
x 80 (approx.) [detail]

cultural innovation...only cultural development and improvement'.² In Ni's *Guanyin* series 2010-2013, the artist created more than 160 bars of soap depicting Guanyin, a Buddhist deity, and supplied them to a range of people who had the option to incorporate the soap into their hygiene routine. The bars of soap were then returned to the artist who photographed each bar to document the changes in form.³ This work expresses Ni's clever and humorous way of challenging people to incorporate the past quite literally, into their everyday experience.



Galaxy 2012-2015, 2014-2015

DISCUSSION

1. Describe the techniques and processes Ni has used to create his work, *Galaxy 2012-2015*.
2. The artist has based the composition or arrangement of objects in this work of art on a star chart constellation. Would the piece be as successful if there were only one coin? What other types of mapping could be used as the basis for arranging this work? In what ways might this change the meaning of the work?
3. What do you think inspired the artist to paint the types of scenes he has depicted on each coin?
4. What value do the coins have, now they have been repurposed?
5. Ni's work encourages us to think about the increasingly commercial art world. Must the commercialisation of the art world always be negative? Discuss.

ACTIVITIES

Thinking

- Can you **research** another artist who creates works using repurposed everyday objects? Famous examples include Marcel Duchamp, Fiona Hall and artists such as Justine Smith and Mark Wagner, who use money in their art.
- **Analyse** the miniature scenes on Ni's coins – what is the subject matter? What does it make you think of?
- **Compare** the scenes on Ni's coins with traditional Chinese landscape paintings from the Song and Yuan dynasties. Does he follow the traditional composition requirements for *shanshui* (mountain-water) paintings or does he stray from this? If the latter, what are the differences?
- **Consider** Chinese cosmology and find some examples of star charts. How does Chinese cosmology differ from the Western tradition?
- **Look** at other artists who have used juxtaposition in their work. For example, Meret Oppenheim's fur lined tea cup, *Object (Le Déjeuner en fourrure)* 1936, or other artists who have repurposed everyday objects to give them new meaning, for example, Rosalie Gascoigne, Peng Wei or Tony Albert's *ASH on me* 2008.

Making

- **Consider** Ni's work, *Guanyin*, created using 160 bars of soap sculpted in the image of Guanyin, a deity associated with Buddhism. People were given the bars of soap to use and the artist photographed each bar after it had been returned to him. Create a work of art by repurposing an everyday object to change the value or meaning of the object.
- **Experiment** with using simple carving tools and soap or soap stone, to create a small sculpture that draws on an aspect of your personal history that is important to you.

GLOSSARY

Cosmology	the science of the origin and development of the universe.
Song Dynasty	(960-1279) an era of Chinese history that was divided into two distinct periods: the Northern Song (960-1127), when the Song court controlled most of mainland China; and the Southern Song (1127-1279), a time during which the Dynasty lost control of northern China.
Yuan Dynasty	(1271-1368) officially the 'Great Yuan', was the empire established by Kublai Khan, leader of the Mongolian Borjigin clan.
Installation	an art work created for a particular site or art gallery, creating a complete environment in itself.
Juxtaposed	placed close together, or side by side.
Constellation	a group of stars forming a recognisable pattern that is traditionally named after its apparent form or identified with a mythological figure.

¹ Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.
² Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.
³ The Hive Centre for Contemporary Art. 2013. *Form and Matter: Solo Exhibition of Ni Youyu*. Accessed 2015 on: <http://www.hiveart.cn/enexhdetails.aspx?id=25>
⁴ Ibid
⁵ Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.





何翔宇
He Xiangyu

Born 1986
Coca-Cola Project – Antique series Circular Fan II, 2009-2010
ink and Coca-Cola on silk, 28 x 30 cm. left
Coca-Cola Project – Antique series Circular Fan III, 2009-2010
ink and Coca-Cola on silk, 28 x 30 cm. right

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何翔宇 He Xiangyu

Born 1986

Coca-Cola Project

Antique series Circular Fan II, 2009-2010 left

Antique series Circular Fan III, 2009-2010 right
ink and Coca-Cola on silk, 28 x 30 cm [each]

ABOUT THE ARTIST

He Xiangyu, a conceptual artist from mainland China, uses a range of media to explore cultural and social issues, in particular, global consumerism. He has made works using a variety of surprising media which have historical and contemporary significance, ancient Chinese artefacts, teeth, rice, porcelain, and Coca-Cola. The artist transforms these materials and gives them new meaning, exploring a range of socio-political and cultural issues that have local and global significance.

In his more recent work, He has chosen a very intimate subject – his own mouth, rather than the more political considerations of his earlier practice. *Everything we create is not ourselves* 2013 is an acutely personal work.

ABOUT THE WORK

He is best known for his *Coca-Cola Project* in which the artist worked with Chinese factory workers and boiled down 127 metric tonnes of Coca-Cola (the average amount of the drink consumed in his home town in three years).⁴ Over the course of a year, the soft drink was reduced to crystalline lumps which were ground down into a dark fluid. With a colour and consistency similar to ink, He applied this concentrated cola essence to a series of small landscape paintings which he created in the style of the Song dynasty (960-1279) landscape (*shanshui*) tradition. These types of painting have a strong tradition in mainland China – the contrast of the content and medium allows the viewer to consider both modern and ancient history. Collectively titled, *Antique Circular Fan*, this series can be read from multiple viewpoints – as a playful and ironic re-interpretation of mainland China's history of landscape painting or in relation to the colonising influence of Westerns culture and consumerism.⁵



Coca-Cola Project - *Antique series Circular Fan III, 2009-2010* [detail]

¹ Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.

² White Cube. 2014. *He Xiangyu*. Accessed 2015 on: http://whitecube.com/exhibitions/he_xiangyu_inside_the_white_cube_2014/

³ Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.

⁴ James Jack. 2013. *The effervescence of artist He Xiangyu*. Accessed 2015 on:

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2013/10/30/arts/the-effervescence-of-artist-he-xiangyu/#.VVBRcWf4J48>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ China Online Museum. No date. *Guo Xi – Song Dynasty*. Accessed 2015 on: <http://www.chinaonlinemuseum.com/painting-guo-xi.php>

⁷ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. 2013. *Australian Curriculum: Visual Arts - Glossary*. Accessed 2015 on:

<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/the-arts/visual-arts/glossary#V>

DISCUSSION

1. Can you tell by looking at these works that one of the materials used to make it is Coca-Cola? How do you think the artist was able to make ink from Coca-Cola? What else do you think it might be made of?
2. How does knowing that the ink is Coca-Cola change how you look at or react to the works?
3. Why do you think the artist has chosen to paint such a traditional looking landscape using an ink made from Coca-Cola?
4. Can you think of other works of art that incorporate Coca-Cola or other globally known brands?
5. In what ways do you think He's work encourages us to think about globalisation and consumer culture?

ACTIVITIES

Thinking

- **Research** conceptual artists. How are they defined? What do they do? Discuss one conceptual artist in comparison with He.
- **Compare** He's paintings with those of Song Dynasty-style landscape painting master, Guo Xi (郭熙, c. 1020-1090).⁶ What visual conventions do both artists employ?
- Close **analysis** of the images reveals there is evidence of people living in the landscape, however, no figures are visible – what else can you understand about the landscape from the paintings?
- **Discuss** the ways in which calligraphy and painting come together in traditional Chinese art. Can you see any calligraphy on He's paintings?
- **Look** at other artists who have used Coca-Cola in their art works: Andy Warhol, Wang Guangyi and Ai Weiwei. What is different about the way He is using the brand? Do you think his approach is more subtle?
- **Consider** global brands. As a class, brainstorm as many global brands as possible.

Making

- **Investigate** a global brand and create a work of art that incorporates that brand in some way. Express your thoughts about the brand through your artwork. Consider a stylistic approach, your choice of media and techniques and the final presentation for your audience.

GLOSSARY

Shanshui

(mountain-water) a style of traditional Chinese painting that emerged during the Song Dynasty (960-1279). Artists generally depicted natural landscapes using brush and ink.

Dynasty

a sequence of rulers from the same family, usually in a feudal or monarchical system.

Globalisation

the process of becoming international, rather than national, the worldwide movement toward the integration of economies, finance, trade, and communications.

Conceptual art

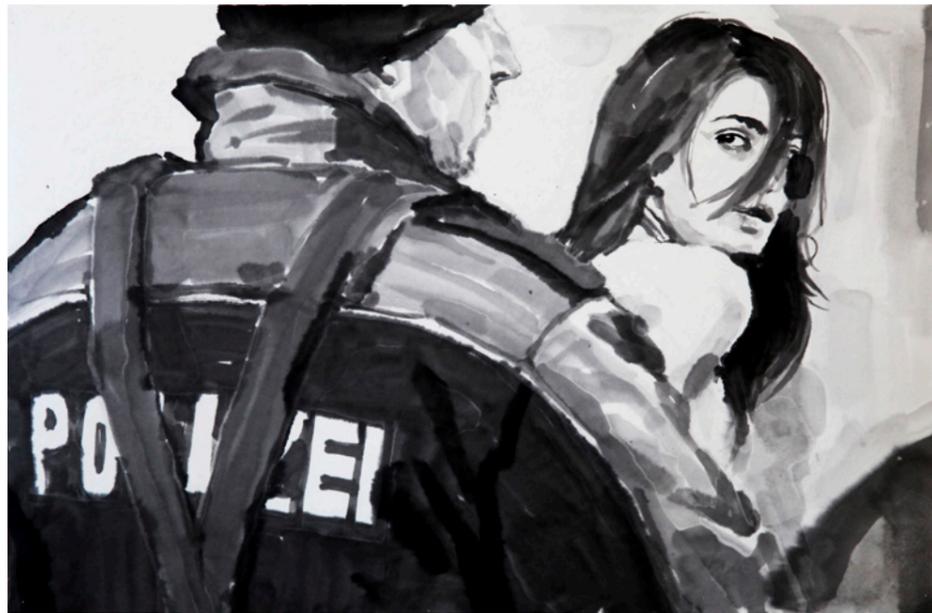
an approach where the idea or concept presented by the artist is more important than the finished work

Visual conventions

combinations of components and approaches, such as combinations of elements, design principles, composition and style.⁷

<http://goo.gl/9P7Hmb>





陈劭雄
Chen Shaoxiong

Born 1962
Ink Media, 2013

single channel video animation. [Video stills]

INK REMIX



INK REMIX

CONTEMPORARY ART
FROM MAINLAND CHINA, TAIWAN AND HONG KONG

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Chen Shaoxiong was a founding member of the 'Big Tail Elephant Group' of conceptual artists in Guangzhou in the 1990s. He now works both independently and collaboratively as a member of two artist collectives, 'Xijing Men' and 'Project without Space'.¹ Chen provides an example of a playful and subversive 'Xijing Men' project focused on the Beijing Olympics, described through a translator in 2013 at the Creative Time Summit.² His conceptual art crosses mediums, including painting, video, animation, photography and drawing.

The artist grew up during a period of significant cultural and political change when information and images in mainland China were tightly controlled. Even today,

ARTIST STATEMENT

For two years, I plucked out and then created photographs of protests in different parts of the world from the internet. I did my work in my peaceful studio and out there was the vigorous world. I painted those images with ink on rice paper, reasonably faithfully but with the stylistic logic that the camera and PC offer and such works present another world in the view of the internet alongside the world in daily life. I, however, am still an insignificant artist.⁶

ABOUT THE WORK

For his work, *Ink Media*, Chen downloaded news photographs of protests from around the world using the Internet. He then re-enacted these scenes with ink drawings. Although not in any chronological or spatial order, the video shows protest as a universal political expression. The artist does not make a bold political statement with his works; they are 'multi-layered and open-ended'.⁷ Chen observes that demonstrations have a raw, real quality which is difficult to manipulate. Street protests have a long history but, with the internet, these protests now have a global audience.



[screen capture] *Ink Media*, 2013 [detail]

¹ Seattle Art Museum. 2014. *Chen Shaoxiong: Ink. History. Media*. Accessed 2015 on: <http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/exhibitions/details?EventId=28608>

² Creative Time Summit. 2013. *Resistors: Chen Shaoxiong*. Accessed 2015 on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDtPwkfWbDU>

³ White Rabbit Contemporary Chinese Art Collection. 2013. *Artists: Chen Shaoxiong*. <http://www.whiterabbitcollection.org/artists/chen-shaoxiong-%E9%99%88%E5%8A%AD%E9%9B%84/>

⁴ Youtube. 2011. *Chen Shaoxiong - Ink History - Video 3'00"*. Accessed 2015 on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqrqOFL8Z6o>

⁵ White Rabbit Contemporary Chinese Art Collection. 2013. *Artists: Chen Shaoxiong*. <http://www.whiterabbitcollection.org/artists/chen-shaoxiong-%E9%99%88%E5%8A%AD%E9%9B%84/>

⁶ Chen Shaoxiong. 2012. *Artist's Statement of Ink Media in Pekin Fine Arts Chen Shaoxiong Catalogue*.

⁷ Sophie McIntyre. 2015. *INK REMIX: Contemporary art from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong Exhibition Catalogue*. Canberra Museum and Gallery.

⁸ CBS Radio Network broadcast by Dave Ross. 2011. *Occupy Wall Street / You Know Things are Messed Up When Librarians Start Marching*. Accessed 2015 on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nul8dz_hwwQ

⁹ Actipedia, no date. Accessed 2015 on: <http://actipedia.org/>

陈劭雄 Chen Shaoxiong

Born 1962

Ink Media, 2013

single channel video animation. [Video stills]

he says, 'in our education, history is deliberately misinterpreted, randomly deleted and repeatedly distorted'.³ His works explore the idea of history as a narrative, and the contradiction that all photography edits the events it 'objectively' records. Chen has created two works, *Ink History* 2010⁴ and *Ink Media* 2013 where he paints versions of photographs with brush and ink, then plays them as flickering black-and-white videos. *Ink History* brings together over a 150 drawings of well-known photographs from the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912 to the beginning of the twenty-first century; the last Emperor, Japanese troops, the Long March, Mao Zedong announcing the People's Republic of China, Mao with Stalin.⁵ *Ink Media* focuses on photographs from news websites of global protest movements.

DISCUSSION

1. Chen painted each of the images in the *Ink Media* video using brush and ink on rice paper. What do you think the images are based on?
2. Name an issue you are aware of that people have protested about recently. Chen focuses on street demonstrations in his work, what forms can protests take?
3. What do you think inspired the artist to paint a version of each photograph he had found via news media on the internet – why not just create a slideshow of the photographs together to make the video?
4. The artist has stitched together a series of his paintings to create a video that has a stop motion animation type quality. Can you think of other examples of stop motion animation?
5. Do you think Chen's work encourages us to examine the media and the immediacy of street protest?

ACTIVITIES

Thinking

- **Compare** Chen's two videos, *Ink History* and *Ink Media*. What is the difference in content? What has remained the same in relation to his approach?
- **Analyse** two recent protest movements – the world wide Occupy movement and the Arab Spring. What techniques did both movements use to mobilise people to protest? What art was inspired by these movements?
- **Discuss** the difference between the photograph of 'you know things are messed up when Librarians start marching'⁸ and the image in the *Ink Media* video (at approx 1.40 mins).
- **Consider** how many countries are featured in the video. How can you tell?
- **Investigate** other artists whose work is strongly political. How do they protest through art? An example of a protest collective is Guerrilla Girls, a feminist group critiquing the art world, an example of an individual artist is Ai Weiwei.
- **Look at** other ways photos have been manipulated by artists to explore an idea. For example, the experience of loss or 'outsider status' in Tracey Moffatt's series, *Fourth* 2001 using images of sportspeople who came fourth in their competition at the 2000 Summer Olympic games in Sydney.

Making

- **Investigate** an issue you feel strongly about. Think about how you could express your ideas about this issue using digital media. The website, Actipedia, showcases a number of ideas for 'creative activism'.⁹ Create a digital media artwork, it could be a video, a series of images, or an installation.

GLOSSARY

Media	the collective word for television, radio and newspapers, the primary means of mass communication.
Propaganda	biased or misleading information, often used to promote a political cause.
Demonstration	a march or meeting protesting or expressing a view on a political issue.
Stop motion animation	a technique used to make objects appear as if they are moving.

