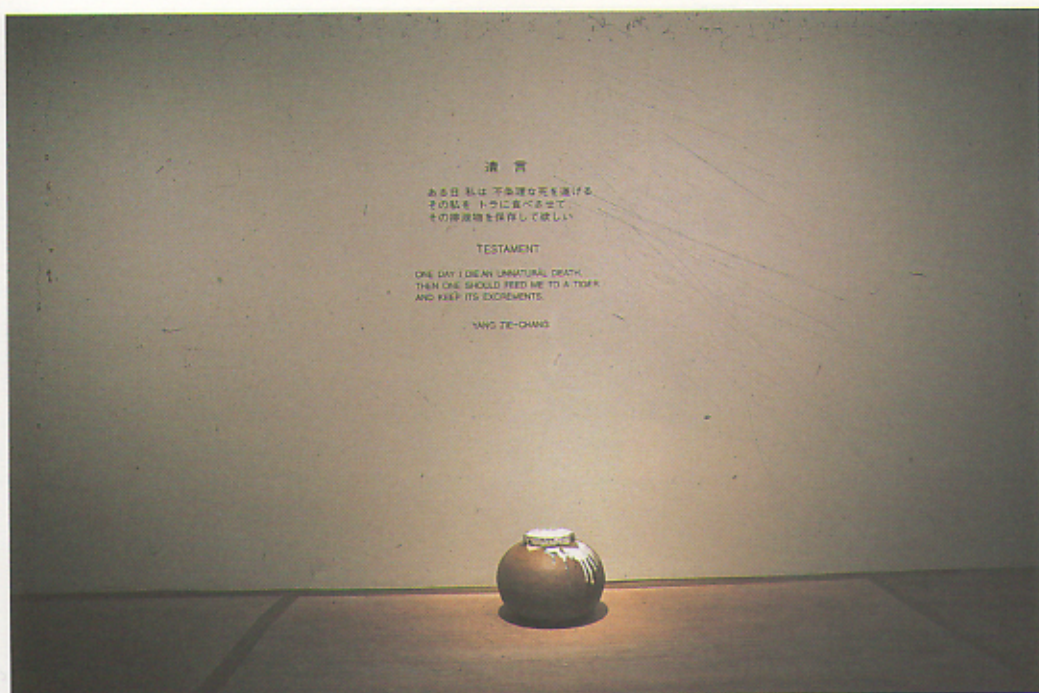


Panel Discussion: Exhibition as Site— Extended Case Study (China 1993)

Claire Hsu: Good afternoon. As part of the Asia Art Archive (AAA) conference, Sites of Construction: Exhibitions and the Making of Recent Art History in Asia, I have the pleasure of introducing our moderators for an expanded case study looking at the year 1993 and the seminal exhibitions of contemporary Chinese art that circulated within that year. This panel was developed by the chair of the AAA board of directors and China scholar Jane DeBevoise and AAA senior researcher Anthony Yung. Unfortunately, Jane DeBevoise is not able to be with us during the three days—she's actually grounded in New York—and when we spoke last week, she said, "Let me have a think about who would be good to replace me. Of course, Julia F. Andrews!" So incredibly, miraculously, and generously, Julia rescheduled her calendar and is here with us today.

Julia F. Andrews is a professor of art history at Ohio State University and also the author of a number of very important publications, including *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China 1949–1979* and most recently *The Art of Modern China*, co-authored with Shen Kuiyi. She has co-curated a number of significant exhibitions, one of them in 1993, *Fragmented Memory: China Avant-Garde in Exile*, at the Wexner Center for the Arts which was one of the first exhibitions in America to consider Chinese installation art. She was also involved in the Guggenheim Museum's 1998 exhibition *A Century In Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth Century China*, and most recently *Light Before Dawn, Unofficial Chinese Art 1974–1985*, which was recently presented at the Asia Society in Hong Kong.

I would like to read from Jane's e-mail when she knew she could not be here. She said: "Julia and I went to Berkeley together and studied under James Cahill in the 1970s (she was always the more diligent student—evidenced by the fact that she actually finished her Ph.D. with him and I did not). We were also exchange students in Beijing at the same time in the early 1980s and worked together on the *China: 5,000 Years* exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum. We are great friends, but our personalities are very different. I speak first and then think later; she speaks carefully and is very thoughtful. I am a brusque, relatively loud New Yorker and she is a well-mannered Midwesterner and relatively soft-spoken." Before Andrews speaks, I am going to hand this over to Anthony Yung, who is in charge of the



Yang Jiechang, *Testament*, 1991, installation at Exceptional Passage, Fukuoka, Japan. Courtesy of Fei Dawei and AAA, Hong Kong.

1989 with an unusual design by Peter Eisenman, had a policy of exhibiting only new site-specific work commissioned for the center's own distinctive space. This meant working within the awkward 12¼ degree angles that were a feature of its distinctive architectural plan. Gao Minglu had come to Ohio State University as visiting scholar in the fall of 1991, at my invitation; we proposed our show to the Wexner Center at the end of 1991, as I recall. It was accepted, but under the condition that we could not invite an artist who would need an exit permit from China. This was because the artists would be asked to come and personally install the work before the opening. So in the end we chose four veterans of the 1980s avant-garde movement who were then living outside China and who all had very interesting previous installation work related to Chinese texts.

Wu Shanzhuan, during installation of *Missing Bamboo*, 1993, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio. Courtesy of the artist and Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University.



The first of the artists was Wu Shanzhuan, who did an installation/performance called *Missing Bamboo*. At its core, and partially disguised by his self-orientalizing, self-objectifying humour, were acutely perceptive critiques of unfolding trends in politics, commerce, and the art world. He appeared at the opening in a panda suit and proceeded to sell toys made on his home island of Zhoushan; his goods—numerous waddling mechanical pandas—surrounded him in the gallery. Ours being a

Wang Youshen sitting next to his installation, *Newspaper Curtain*, 1993, at Aperto '93, Venice Biennale. Courtesy of Wang Youshen.



Wu Shanzhuan, *Saving Money for Art Materials in the Bank and Working for the Exhibition in the Kitchen*, 1993, performance at Aperto '93, Venice Biennale. Courtesy of Wang Youshen.



The third Chinese artist I chose, Wu Shanzhuan, lived in Hamburg and best exemplified the margins between art and daily life. The artistic concept he adopted for Aperto '93 was that no artwork would be presented in the exhibition. He put the fees received from Aperto '93 in the bank then showed up on the first day as one of the staff and collected tickets at the entrance to the exhibition. The act of depositing the money from the show and the one-day performance itself was his work.

Before creating this piece, he had another idea. When he attended China Avantgarde at HKW, he also got a job working at the HKW bar making coffee. When I was there, he asked me to have a cup of cappuccino; he said he would make

it with skimmed milk. The most important thing is that he considered this an artwork. Wu Shanzhuan once filled out an application for a job in Hamburg. There were about fifteen questions on the form such as "Can you drive?", "Are you good at the computer?", "Do you have any other skills?" For all of them, he answered "No." He said, "Now I have proved that I am an artist because I know nothing else." In the Biennale, you could not easily recognize or find his work; he did not talk about his idea in detail but explained it in writing. Wu Shanzhuan's work *Saving Money for Art Materials in the Bank and Working for the Exhibition in the Kitchen* (1993) was his Aperto '93 contribution; this was a performance in which he stood at the entrance to the exhibition and sold tickets.

Anthony Yung: I would like to ask one more question about how things developed. According to what you mentioned just now, because of the article about Chinese art in *Flash Art*, Bonito Oliva and Kontova got to know you. And then they invited you to be one of the curators for Aperto '93. So, as you are a Chinese curator, did they ask you to select Chinese artists or artists whose work focuses on China? Were there any requirements like that?

Aperto '93 catalogue cover, 45th Venice Biennale, 1993.



Kong Chang'an: Yes, they did. One basic rule for curating Aperto '93 was that it be open for different voices, especially for those artists who did not live in Europe at that time. What's more, they hoped that I would not select artists based on my understanding of and familiarity with Chinese art but look for works by other artists from my own point of view. Of course, at that time, I was not familiar with many artists because

I had been in Europe for only a short time. So when I chose artists, I also referred to information and materials provided by the organizers. Then I contacted the artists, and after getting a deeper understanding of their