

# Humanistic Care

## Zhao ZHANG 张

“Humanistic care” is the core concern of Zhao ZHANG’s works, and it also reflects his pivot. Although the internet became particularly prominent, while reflecting on the relationship between the Internet and people and trying new methods of creating, he continues to focus on a human-oriented theme. *Flowing out of the Frozen River* is an improvisation he made while visiting Northwest China in early 2021, which coincides with his lockdown and stagnation experience during the pandemic.

“张”的作品的核心关注点就是“人文关怀”，这也反映了他的创作支点。虽然互联网变得尤为突出，而在反思互联网与人的关系并尝试新的创作方法时，他依然专注于以人为本的主题。《冰河解冻》是他2021年初西北旅行时即兴创作的，这与他在疫情期间经历的封控和停滞体验相吻合。

## Flowing out of the Frozen River

张

## Biography

Zhao ZHANG: Young Artist – MFA Fine Arts in School of Visual Arts

Zhao ZHANG’s creation focuses on the gap between individual perception and structural language in the current life dilemma. By appropriating daily behaviour and spectacle and resetting in a semantic context, he loosens the inertia of thinking and action. Through investigation, dialogue, performance, and theatre creation explore the possibility of promoting individual life’s desirable state with localization, regionalization, and network dynamic contact.





**Cleo:** Could you tell us about any changes you have gone through or discovered? What might be your Pivot during the pandemic be?

**ZHANG:** The pandemic made me reconsider the relationship between myself and the digital world. Before the pandemic, I felt that the Internet was invisible, just like the air we are breathing, it's so unfelt that I hardly thought about it in normal times. What's more, I've recognized the Internet as a kind of medium that is broken through physical limitations, which could provide us with multiple different perspectives. However, after the outbreak of the pandemic and the lockdown made it inescapable, then the internet became blunt, abrupt and the only method for communicating, which alarmed me.

I realised that when it is hard for us to meet physically, the digitalisation of our networks has caused alienation among us. Everyone is flattened and tends to be the same without our facial expressions, clothing, etc. This could be a reason why we're gradually losing our patience with the online content. Although, it is undeniable that the Internet will become more and more important in the future, so I am also actively learning some codes and programming languages, which I would like to use as a new expression method for making art.

With all these things though, I still drew a defensive line deep in my mind, that is, what I should value most is never the techniques used in the artworks, but about its core displays of humanity. The specifics still need to be sorted out, so briefly, I will call it "The Humanistic Care".

**ZHANG:** My Pivot probably emerged during the time I was preparing for the *Gibberish* exhibition. It was the end of May and the beginning of June 2020 and China had already suffered a lot from the pandemic, and the strategy for controlling its spread had started taking effect. I also returned to Xi'an to

prepare for my graduation. Before that, I was still very anxious, because it's really hard to keep calm under the conditions of lockdown and barely going out. Although I would force myself to focus on my own affairs, my mood would still be dragged by the Internet. Therefore, I was always very tense, a bit like a "war footing.

After returning to Xi'an, this tension and anxiety eased a lot, I started to no longer take the pandemic as the main crisis that needed to be resolved. Since it cannot be solved quickly, I should be more patient and should cope with its existence in my daily life. Also because I became numb to the overwhelming information, I might have accepted the possibility of its normalisation unconsciously, in order to feel better.

At that time, all the domestic colleges and universities were holding their exhibitions online, unsatisfied with that, my friends and I in the same class rented one of the stores in the urban village opposite our college to hold a small physical exhibition—*Gibberish*. These stores were very hot before the pandemic and became desolate once the pandemic broke out. On the one hand, this theme referred to the multi-faceted content created by everyone participating in the exhibition. On the other hand, gibberish is the meaningless codes displayed due to the programme crash, which reflected the physical stuff that couldn't be transformed by the Internet.

Everyone was suffocated at that time—there had been no exhibitions for about half a year. As a result, lots of people came to see the *Gibberish*. The initial idea was to let this exhibition appear as an intervention at the site of the village in the city, which was more in line with my style of art. Therefore, I tried my best to make this exhibition as a white box within my budget, because I would take it as my feeling during the pandemic, which also suddenly broke into our lives.







more perceptible, effective and practical. At least it won't cause too much ambiguity, so I wouldn't rush to pick big topics for my work at present.

Simultaneously, regional and macroscopic things definitely have their connections. I think it's like the relationship between blocks and surfaces. The microcosmic could be expanded from a small field to a larger one, and there might be a balancing point to let this transition have potential to be processed. If it is a specific localising artwork, it would need a more superior point of fielding, and it may require everyone to understand the context of its concern. Everyone might know understand grand topics but their practical experiences are still diverse, so we need to keep our exploration of the balance point among these.

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**Cleo: I'm also very interested in *Business as usual*, so could**

**you talk about that work? What kind of meaning you intended to express through the work?**

**ZHANG:** The Unharmed Land is about the transcendent power of the Folk beliefs. It was filmed in the northern Shanxi Province, that is, northwest Jin (abbreviation of the Shanxi province of China, which refers to the region of Shanxi Province nowadays used to be the territory of the Jinn state during the Spring and Autumn period in Chinese history).

Shanxi was generally prosperous in ancient times and is gradually declining in modern times. Livelihoods of people there dependent are more on mineral resources, and the scale of urban development is limited. Therefore, as a result, the ancient buildings in Shanxi are well preserved, which also includes the folk cottages.

Almost every village there has some cottages or temples, for working the gods of nature, Buddhism, Taoism, and gods from the local legends. For example, when it is dry, the local inhabitants would build a Dragon King Temple (According to some Chinese ancient legends the Dragon Kings are the gods living deep in the sea, they charge the water and are responsible for the rainfall, each of them own an area of response). The folk beliefs there are very regional, it is possible that upon crossing from the mountain there, no one knows the gods worshipped by the village.

Due to historical reasons of modern China, the strategy of "Posijiu"(at that time, the rapid development of China caused some drawbacks of persuading the faster development, as a result, some unreasonable strategies emerged, Posijiu is one of them, means breaking the things old for creating new things, during the process of implementing this strategy, many historical objects were labelled as "old" and were destroyed), almost all the statues of these temples were smashed, and some even were reduced to ruins. The statues that exist are all newly made in the past two decades. Hence, the technique





to a piece of performance artwork. There was even an audience to answer the question of “Hi there?”, it’s kind of like a response of Joseph’s question “Everyone is an artist”. There was another kid who brought a painting that had just been painted in the institution named “798”, I also noted his name. Later, during my reflection, I felt that I didn’t really forfeit my rights, what’s more, I even expanded my rights for giving anyone the right to be an artist. This is actually quite ironic, and it came to me on reflection. It was like a joke. I originally wanted to dismantle the power, but resulted instead in the infinitely expanding of it. Of course, it is interesting in terms of form, with a high degree of participation, but it was still about to discuss.

The link of *Hi there?*:  
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**Cleo: What kind of impact did the pandemic have on your work? (It can be viewed from both internal and external perspectives, such as how it affects your work plan? Or**











