

WHY exhibition! A conversation

This conversation, begun on 10 January 2023 and edited on 09 March 2023, brings together the artists who collaborated on the exhibition project. The presentation of the content of the conversation is arranged according to the time of the interview

Jiahui Li (curator)

Qing Wang(artist)

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JH: I would really like to hear your thoughts on the theme of our exhibition so far, especially the exhibition titled "WHY", which expresses different concerns of women through art works and attempts to inspire people to think about why women have these emotions. Do you have any suggestions about the content of the exhibition?

W: My suggestion about the content of the exhibition is that women tend to be delicate and have explicit emotions. Art, literature or daily life can become the soil of this area, so the exhibition content can be multi-dimensional, such as novels, music, sound installation art and so on.

JH: Thank you very much for your advice. Indeed, recently I have been considering whether to collect some novels, music and installation art to reflect the delicacy of women. Your work named *The Entanglement* was created when you graduated from university. How do you describe this work and what ideas do you want to convey?

W: *The Entanglement* series is immature, but very, very sincere. Artworks are creations that stem from personal experience. I project my own spiritual tragedy into the works, which are effortless. I just use this way to get through the void and escape the sudden change of daily life.

JH: Thank you very much for sharing the creation process of your work. What painting styles and skills do you show in this work?

W: I think it belongs to the performance class. My postgraduate major is "Contemporary Painting Language Research".

JH: In my opinion, your work shows bondage but also the spirit of struggle and resistance. I don't know if I understand this correctly.

W: The image of being bound and bound in the work is the manifestation of his inner struggle, which actually comes from the lovelorn work. Later, he was "unbound" after painting. So, there is no deviation in your understanding.

JH: The main artworks in this exhibition are almost all created by artists between the ages of 18 and 25 and show the experiences of this young woman. Please give some advice for women in this age group.

W: Not so much to women of this age, but to myself at this time, I don't think I am necessarily qualified to give beneficial advice to others. I am 37 years old and often doubt life. And as I grow older, I feel more and more absurd about the world. I wish girls wanted to be loved a little less. Life experiences an experience, encounters a fate, and learns to find a way to accept it completely.

JH: Yes, life is an experience, and we should learn to accept what has happened and make peace with ourselves. Finally, more and more areas pay attention to feminism in the field of contemporary art to emphasize the power of women. How do you see this happening?

W: Focusing on the topic of feminism and emphasizing female power itself shows that women are not independent enough and there is no equality. Imagine any civilized society putting up signs saying 'Don't spit'.

JH: Yes, hopefully the day will come soon when women are truly equal. Thank you for your interview.

Jiahui Li (curator)
Xinyue Luo (artist)

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JH: What is the creative method of your series of works?

XY: This is a work conveyed through the medium of performance. However, in the process of forming the whole work, I chose the medium I am most familiar with, whether it is face painting, body painting or facial mask painting. And all of that is eventually incorporated into my performance. In the final performance I smeared on my face, using paint waves to my body and so on.

JH: In your work, I see your negative emotions in the face of stress, but more I see your spirit of resistance and the power of light yearning for you. I don't know if this understanding is correct.

XY: Yes. This understanding is feasible. In addition to the negative low energy emotions caused by external pressure, I have been in a series of negative emotions such as worry, fear and anxiety during my constant struggle with the disease. However, there is still a light in my heart that does not completely engulf me in darkness, which is what I want to emphasize in my final work.

JH: Do you still think that facial anxiety is a big problem for you?

XY It's actually a difficult question for me to answer. I love beauty since childhood, whether it is face, or figure I value more. This point I still can't say completely reconcile with myself. So when keratosis follicularis invaded my entire body, it was a horror I'd never felt before. Even after the illness, every time I see my face will still subconsciously to protect it, so as not to experience such a baptism. But this facial anxiety isn't the biggest issue in my life right now. In fact, the anxiety about the face gradually decreases with more experience, so simply put, although care, but no longer anxious.

JH: Do you have anything you want to say to a woman of your age?

XY: In fact, I hate my current age. Girls in their 20s are more confused and have no

direction, experience and economic foundation to support any choice. I often want to skip the 20+ years, whether it's back to the teens, or into the 30s, so that I can live a happier and freer life. So I want to tell girls in this age group that they should keep enriching themselves, whether it is knowledge or vision. When they are fully fledged, everything they want is on the way.

JH: Thank you for you rely. Our short interview is now over.

XY: You are welcome.

Jiahui Li (curator)
Siyuan Dong (artist)

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JH: What forms do you use to express this theme?

SY: It is the painting of relatively concrete things on oil on canvas. I gave up the traditional technique of repeatedly applying and superimposing, hoping to explore a more light and breathable way, and superimposing on the picture with small strokes.

JH: Does your work reflect your own feelings?

SY: Yes, it's called "Not Yet," which represents confusion and hope about the possibility of something that hasn't happened yet.

JH: May I ask when did you have this feeling?

SY: To be specific, at the end of one phase, another phase is about to begin, that is the last semester of the senior year.

JH: Do you still feel this way?

SY: There are, after all, people are always going through an end and a beginning, is in the process of repeating the process of growth - and graduate school is a relatively long transition.

JH: So for you, what do you think is the cause of this?

SY: We are always worried about what is unknown and impossible to grasp, but at the same time excited about what can be achieved. Walking down the stairs, you can't see what's on the next floor, but you can imagine and expect.

JH: What does the hope expressed in the picture represent? How's the job going?

SY: At the bottom of the stairs is not necessarily a piece of cake, it could be a packet of rat poison. We all know that the road ahead is not always bright, but we must move forward, and those positive or negative will become gains.

Jiahui Li (curator)
Jingshu Zhang (artist)

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JH: What forms of expression do you use to express this theme?

JS: The fusion of modern dance and Chinese Shandong folk dance expresses this theme.

JH: Does your work reflect your own feelings?

JS: Yes, it reflects some of my own inner feelings

JH: May I ask when did you have this feeling?

JS: About three years ago, I found myself at odds with the society around me, and my ideas were different from those of my peers

JH: Do you still feel this way?

JS: I think it was confusion and fear. When these thoughts appeared in my mind, I felt fear. I was afraid that I was different, I was afraid that I would not be approved. So as these thoughts piled up I started to get lost, not knowing what to do with myself and not knowing what to do with my life every day.

JH: So for you, what do you think is the cause of this?

JS: I think it has something to do with my own living environment. The people I meet and the things I experience are different, and the society has a different perspective. I will be affected by my living environment, more or less.

JH: Do you lose confidence in life because of these phenomena?

JS: No, happiness is always more than trouble, and I think, these are my growth process, I look forward to blooming flowers of my own.

Jiahui Li
Xiaoya Ran (Paris Ran)

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JH: Good afternoon. Today let's talk about the art you have to offer.

Paris: Ok. Umm...

JH: First of all, I'm curious about your work called *The CoexistenceII*, what do you mean by mushrooms? Some of the pieces in the series feature mushrooms, needles and threads. I wonder what this collection is saying?

Paris: The mushroom is a metaphor for people, I think people are gregarious, mushrooms are parasitic gregarious. When you buy mushrooms in a Chinese wet market, you sell them by the roots, and there are a bunch of them. My observation about mushrooms is that I bought a handful of mushrooms, I didn't rush to eat it, I put the mushrooms on the table. But when I accidentally pulled one apart, I noticed that the mushrooms that had been pulled away from the group went stale faster, while the ones that were still in the group held on to the water longer. At that moment, I thought of people. People keep struggling in the group until one day they are out of the group but not very comfortable. I used the mushroom as a metaphor for people. A nail is a social discipline that tells you to be where you are and stop moving yourself. It's a kind of social identity immobility, gender immobility and self-persuasion. Everything is blocked, everyone's communication channels are blocked. And the line represents entanglement.

JH: I really agree with you about the concept of social life. It's very straightforward to use mushrooms as a metaphor for human social life. But one of the mushrooms was alone and had red strings tied to it.

Paris: This is the chastity line, and then it's self-advice. There's another expression, between mother and child, like this mushroom with a little mushroom growing underneath it. This work, which appears to be a chastity line, can also be understood as the inseparability between mother and child during breastfeeding.

JH: In this series of works, there are two works whose blue background is different from other photos. So what do they represent?

Paris: It also represents the family. There is a crack on the big mushroom, which represents the exploitation of many things from the female body.

JH: Does this crack represent a female reproductive organ?

Paris: Genitals or a wound.

JH: Ok. *The tower* series has a woman with a human body but a snake tail. Is this woman because there are some female images in Chinese mythological stories that are human bodies and snake tails, or are you using it to express something?

Paris: It has something to do with the occult. This snake is called an Ouroboros. It's an alchemical symbol for rebirth.

JH: Its tail is swallowed by its head, as if demonstrating a sense of infinite circulation.

Paris: Yeah, yeah, it's an infinite loop. The snakehead and the man below are both my face, and the tower represents what I used to believe. The tower is from a tarot card also called the tower, and the collapse of the tower represents the collapse of the life that was built and my thinking and my beliefs. Then the snake wrapped around the tower and kept shrinking, which is also what I want to forget the faith and experience. But the tower was on the water, and I had no way out.

JH: When faith collapsed and there was nowhere else to go. Were you in a state of numbness?

Paris: I was numb for a while, and during that time being numb was a form of self-preservation. I'm very sensitive to what's going on around me. I'm a very sensitive person. I chose to be numb during that time. I chose to be numb to the things I saw

JH: I know how you feel. It's a painful situation especially when you can't control your mind to think about it. It's like a chain holding you back, but you can't throw it away. Let's talk about *Two of cups*.

Paris: Do you not understand the meaning of the Holy Grail?

JH: Yes, I don't really understand. I didn't know anything about the Bible, so when I saw the introduction of this work, I didn't feel anything because I didn't have any information about it in my head.

Paris: This painting represents me talking to another version of myself. I face others is the mirror of the warm tone of me, I often talk to myself. I painted many, many layers of Windows on that house. I am like the coffin of the Han Dynasty in China, like Guan and Guo. Outside is Guan and inside is Guo. I think the house I live in is like this, and so is my psychological defense line.

JH: Does that mean you have a lot of defenses against the outside world?

Paris: Yes.

JH: In the other series you provided, I saw a lot of images of babies and wombs.

Paris: Yes, for ten months in my mother's belly, I felt dreamy floating on an island. That's how I felt about my mother's womb. There's a picture of me with my dead brother on my back and my mother's ribs stuck in me. It also implies that I am stuck in my family, that I have no way to change the situation, and that I want to change something for my mother. And that's why I got so attached to the family stuff that I wanted to study gender, because of the environment that I grew up in like domestic violence. This is a small wound that has been ripped open over and over until it is torn again without feeling anything.

JH: Umm. Some people spend their whole lives healing their childhood because they were so traumatized by it. But no one can guide them in how to heal themselves and how to bring happiness to themselves, so it's a negative cycle.

Paris: But I'm OK, I use my art and literature to vent it. That's why I'm studying museology now. These things are a new way for me to look at social relationships.

JH: Thank you for your interview. Through this interview, I have learned a lot of detailed information about your works and your personal experience. That's all for this interview.