



# CUT-GENESIS

Aura in the Age of  
Reproduction

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# INTRODUCTION

Paper cutting, a Chinese folk art with a history spanning thousands of years, has been passed down through festivals, rituals, and daily life. It is more than just imagery—it is a memory carried by the body, a weaving together of culture and time.

Today, we live in an era where everything can be copied and replaced. When patterns can be generated with a click and transformed instantly, the slowness and texture of paper cutting may seem obsolete. But I propose a different possibility: traditional craftsmanship and technology are not necessarily opposed—they can coexist and fuse.

In this exhibition, I am not attempting to restore the past image of paper cutting, but to place it within a field of reactivation. Here, paper, patterns, and structure become mediums rather than outcomes; light, shadow, and scene become languages rather than mere backgrounds. I hope the audience won't come to see an intangible cultural heritage exhibition, but rather to enter a new perceptual space: a renewed dialogue between paper cutting, technology, and craftsmanship.

The works in this exhibition merge traditional hand-cut techniques with digital tools like laser cutting. Paper is no longer just a carrier of images but becomes a medium that can be perceived spatially. The combination of light, movement, and material gives this seemingly delicate art form a new vitality and force.

This exhibition draws from the principles of critical curating and the concept of participatory curation. It does not seek to offer answers, but to create an open perceptual space in which each visitor becomes part of the exhibition. The exhibition places artworks within a spatial dialogue: between interior and exterior, between manual and mechanical. You are invited to construct your logic of viewing through touch, movement, and personal rhythm.

The exhibition space itself is part of the experience. From the presentation of traditional paper cutting to the participatory areas of interactive generation, this exhibition encourages the audience to reflect on the relationship between tradition, reproduction, and value. We are not attempting to resolve the contradiction between craft and technology, but to make this tension visible, thinkable, and open to dialogue.

Between tradition and contemporaneity, reproduction and craftsmanship, this exhibition constructs a dialectical space filled with tension. We invite you to step into this space, not to revisit old techniques, but to re-understand them. We offer a space where observation and reflection can unfold. Perhaps tradition has not "disappeared," but is simply breathing in a new way.

# ARTIST

## Fenwan Chen

Fenwan Chen is a new-generation contemporary paper-cutting artist based in Guangdong, China. She graduated from the Printmaking Department of Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. Her work focuses on paper cutting but breaks the limitations of traditional two-dimensional expression. Since 2014, she has been exploring the modern transformation of paper cutting, preserving its folkloric significance while expanding into spatial installations and interactive media.

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# ARTWORK



## *Tenfold Happiness-Fenwan Chen*

This is an installation work constructed from repeated smiling faces cut from paper, mimicking the repetition and continuity of mechanical production while injecting emotional warmth. By folding paper cuts into a circular structure, Chen creates a communal experience of “happiness.” She bridges replication and emotion, suggesting that even reproduction can be a tool for emotional expression.

This work will be installed on the eave outside.

## *Infinite-Fenwan Chen*

This work uses the image of a Chinese dragon to visualize the concept of infinity. Composed of modular paper-cut nodes, it forms a flowing shape activated by LED lighting. This method mirrors industrial automation and demonstrates the computational potential of paper-cut language in a modern context. The work retains a handcrafted texture, forging a link between digital logic and bodily experience, reimagining paper cutting as a spatial and cultural construct.





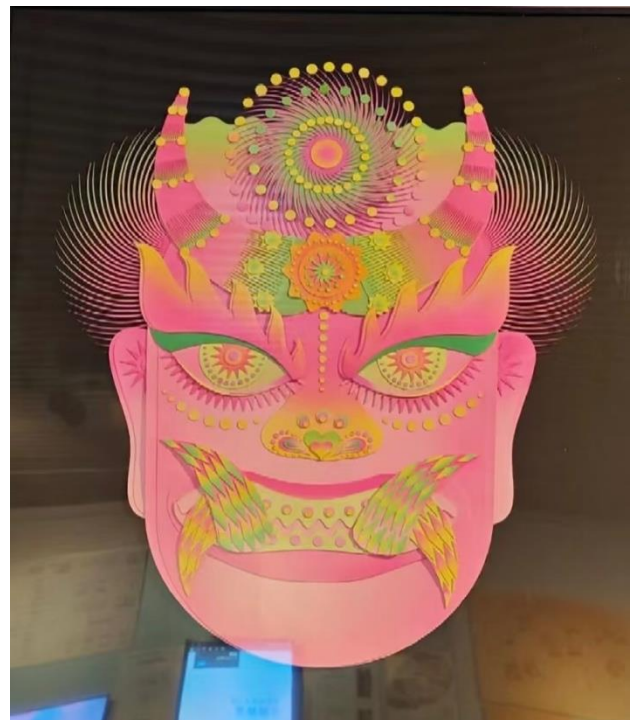
# ARTIST

## Rainey Lee

Rainey Lee is of Tujia ethnicity and received her MFA from the Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University in 2024. She specializes in paper cutting, exploring the fusion of ethnic craft and contemporary art. As a Tujia, she is concerned about the endangered state of the Chenzhou Nuo culture. She believes artists must not only preserve but also reactivate traditional culture in modern society.

**Contact :** Rednote: #Rainey

# ARTWORK



## *NUODOM*-Rainey Lee

*Nuodom* is a self-created term by the artist, derived from the word "evildom" in the context of "Mogu Dominion".

The *Nuodom* series originates from the totemic masks of Chenzhou Nuo opera. Combining laser engraving and hand-collage techniques, Lee transforms these religious symbols into hybrid structures between two-dimensional and relief. It is not a commemorative restoration of tradition, but a reinvention of its structural language, exploring how folk paper cutting can be reactivated and reorganized within contemporary art systems.

# ARTIST

## Bovey Lee

Bovey Lee is based in Hong Kong and holds a BA in Fine Arts from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her practice combines traditional Chinese paper cutting with Western conceptual art methods, forming a unique style that merges meticulous craftsmanship with critical visual language. Known for high-density image construction, she presents complex but readable social narratives.

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# ARTWORK



## *Divertical-Bovey Lee*

Bovey Lee integrates hand-drawing, digital modelling, and traditional paper cutting, creating a visual structure full of urban symbols and biological mechanisms. The work resembles architectural blueprints, mapping the ecology of nature and technology in modern life. By combining digital reproduction with handcrafted vulnerability, Lee deconstructs the “perfect system,” using traditional media as a tool for contemporary critique.

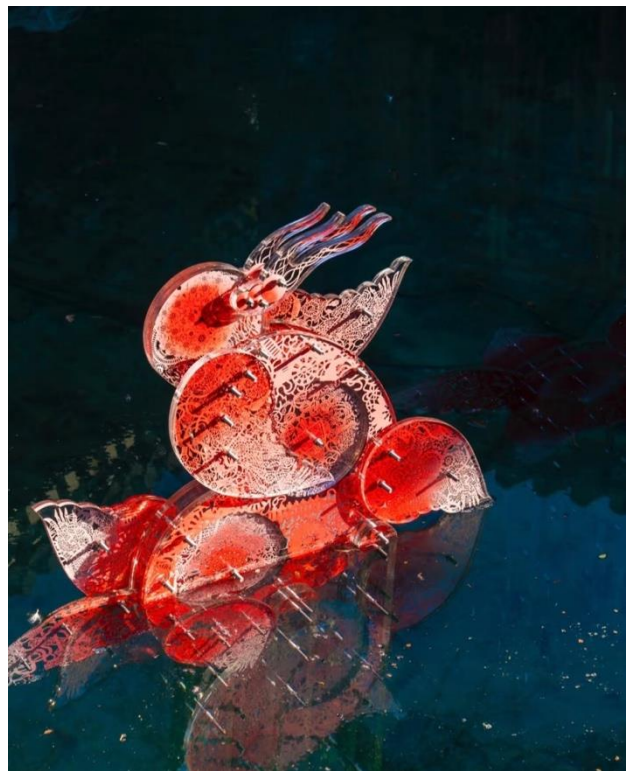
# ARTIST

## Xiaoqing Cui

Xiaoqing Cui holds a master's degree from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, focusing on the transformation and innovation of traditional Chinese paper cutting in contemporary art. He aims to bridge tradition and modernity, enabling viewers to experience cultural inheritance and innovation through his works.

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# ARTWORK



## *Leaping-Xiaoqing Cui*

*Leaping* is a dynamic installation combining paper cutting with mechanical systems, simulating the movement of koi fish in water. Each fish is laser-cut. Cui rewrites the spatial language of paper cutting through technology, granting movement and behaviour to once-static images. The work redefines time-space dimensions and responds to the question of how tradition can transform under technical conditions, making paper cutting a medium of sensory activation and digital generation.

This work will be installed in the outdoor pond.



# EXHIBITION SITE

The exhibition will be held in a traditional *siheyuan* courtyard located at **No. 93, Tieshu Xiejie Hutong, Beijing**. The site's studio is currently seeking collaborative partners who can use the courtyard space free of charge, and I will be working with them.

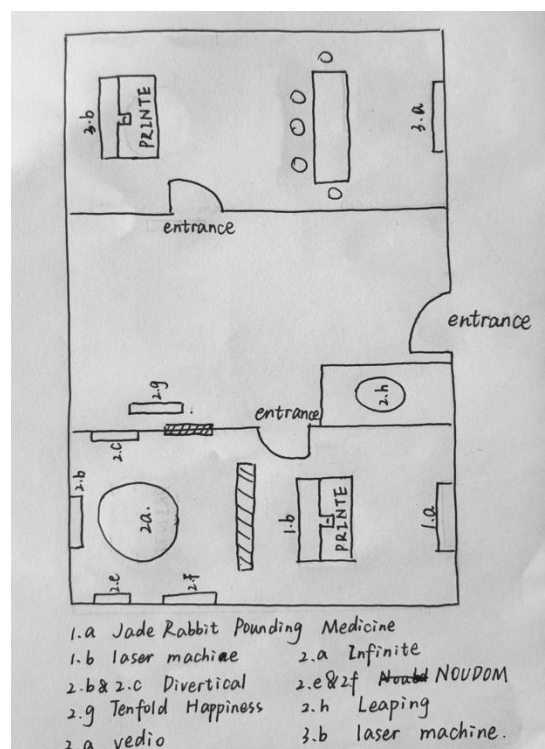
*Siheyuan* architecture represents a classic paradigm of Beijing's historical culture. Its structure follows an organic integration of the "man-made" and the "natural." This "hand-built everyday space" symbolizes both the craftsmanship and cultural spirit of this exhibition. In an age where digital technology increasingly permeates human life, *siheyuan* courtyards are often repurposed, incorporating lighting systems, networks, and serving as hybrid spaces for exhibitions, living, or work. Thus, *siheyuan* is both traditional and contemporary; both handcrafted and technologically transformed. This directly parallels the core issue explored by paper cutting in the exhibition: when traditional media encounter modern mechanical reproduction, is their value diluted, or revitalized with a new language?

Additionally, *Tieshu Xiejie* enjoys a geographical advantage. It is located in a well-known historical and cultural district of Beijing, easily accessible via public transport, ensuring reachability and audience engagement. Surrounded by popular tourist attractions such as Tiananmen Square, it attracts a high footfall, offering a potential audience base.

(Explanation: All the pictures of the exhibition site are sourced from the studios that provided the site.)



Entrance and Courtyard



Layout plan



# EXHIBITION FORMAT

This group exhibition centres on the convergence of contemporary art and traditional craft. Group exhibitions offer the advantage of diverse expression. When exploring open-ended and historically layered questions such as “tradition vs. modernity” and “craft vs. technology,” group shows allow curators to guide audiences into differentiated spaces through curated arrangements and thematic clustering.

The exhibition is organized into three sections across two exhibition halls :



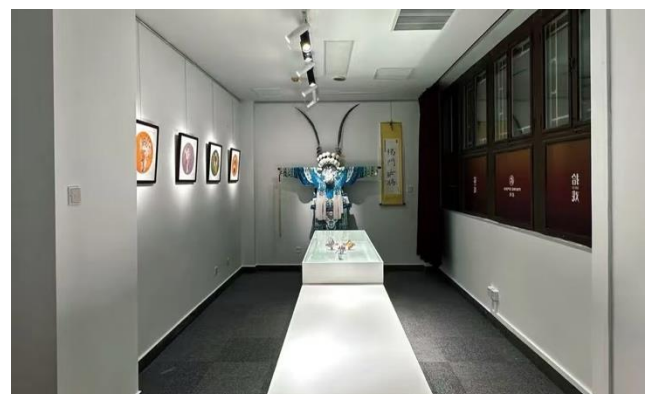
*Jade Rabbit Pounding Medicine*

## Part 1: Juxtaposition of Traditional Craft and Technological

Upon entering the first room, visitors encounter Xiaodi's classic folk paper cutting, *Jade Rabbit Pounding Medicine*, displayed on a white wall. Beside it is a laser cutting machine, continuously generating paper cut patterns on-site—visually and sensorially contrasting handcraft with machinery. This sets the curatorial tone, raising the question: does mechanical reproduction truly strip art of its aura?

## Part 2: Contemporary Expressions of Paper Cutting

The second half of the first room is separated by white walls to form an independent exhibition zone. The works are not merely hung on the wall, but are distributed on the eaves or in the outdoor pond. This layout emphasizes that the artworks are not simply placed in space—they form the space, encouraging the audience to experience the contemporary transformation of paper cutting as they walk through it. (Fenwan Chen's *Infinite* is placed at the center of the main hall; Rainey Lee's *Nuodom* and Bovey Lee's *Divertical* hang on main walls, forming a dialogue with the courtyard's traditional wooden windows; *Tenfold Happiness* is exhibited on the eaves outside; *Leaping* by Cui Xiaoqing is displayed in an outdoor pond, its fish-shaped cuts shifting with the sunlight.)



Exhibition hall before setup

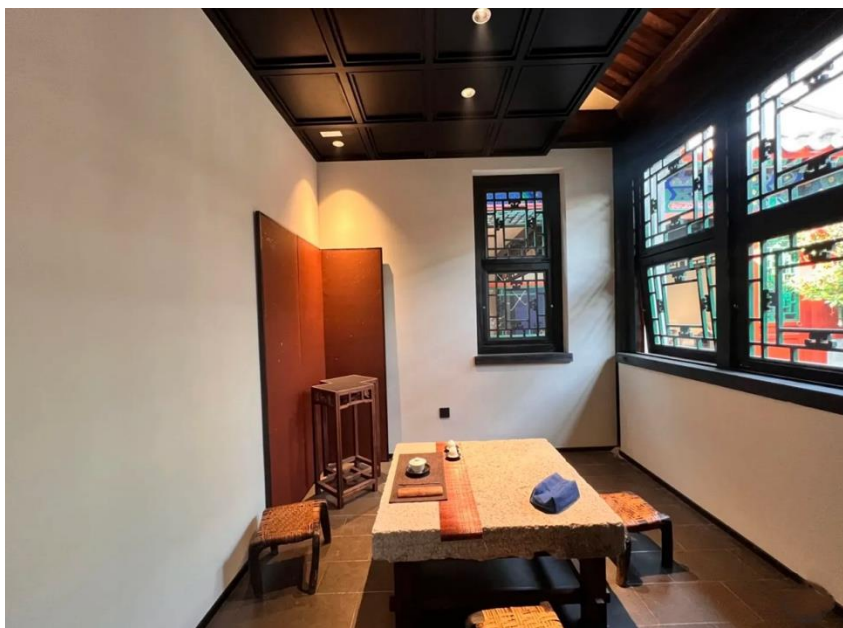
# EXHIBITION FORMAT

## Part 3: Participatory Paper-Cutting Experience

The second room serves as an independent hands-on experience area. In one corner, a projector plays a short instructional video on paper cutting, filmed by Jianglu Xiao. Participants can try their hand at traditional paper cutting at designated workstations. Once completed, their works can be scanned into a computer and transformed into refined digital paper-cut designs using an online program. A nearby laser cutting machine will then quickly reproduce the works. Through this process, participants can intuitively understand how the art of paper cutting is reborn through media transformation.

**Explanation:** the video will be filmed and edited by Jianglu Xiao, a current student in the CAT program at the University of Edinburgh. She has previously produced several documentaries on Chinese intangible cultural heritage, including *Dance of Dai Soul* and *The Destiny of Yue Opera*, and has won the National First Prize in the National College Students Advertising Art Competition.

The featured artist in the video is Xiaodi Liu, a representative inheritor of Chinese paper-cutting. Born into a family of paper-cutting artists, she is the fifth-generation successor of the "Baotou Paper Cutting" heritage project. She learned the craft from her mother from a young age and later founded the Xiaodi Paper Cutting Art Studio in Beijing. During the pandemic, she continued teaching paper cutting through livestreams, allowing more people to experience the charm of intangible culture. She has extensive experience in oral instruction. The video, lasting about 4 to 5 minutes, will include: a brief introduction to paper cutting, a demonstration of basic patterns, and a step-by-step guide to completing a full design with visual logic. It will be filmed using a combination of fixed shots and close-ups.



Interactive zone before setup

# AUDIENCE

This exhibition focuses on the regeneration and transmission of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in contemporary society. Amid accelerating digitalization, ICH faces a severe crisis of continuity, particularly due to intergenerational gaps among younger demographics. Hence, the primary target audience is young and middle-aged individuals, who are key agents in information dissemination and possess strong cultural learning capabilities. Their participation can help reactivate, reinterpret, and reproduce ICH. The second target group consists of foreign tourists and visitors interested in Chinese traditional culture and crafts. Eager to experience local culture, they are active participants in community art events. Their lack of preconceived notions allows them to engage with the exhibition as “pure viewers,” offering fresh perspectives and cross-cultural resonance.

Since the site is in a Beijing tourist area, I will post exhibition posters in nearby youth hostels, cafés, bookstores, and handicraft shops—spaces that naturally attract foot traffic. This localized strategy aims to spark spontaneous interest. I believe visitors don’t need to come from the “art world”; as long as they pause and step into the courtyard, they’ve begun a dialogue between tradition and the contemporary.



# REFELCTION OF EDI

This project consciously addresses accessibility and ethics within the context of a small-scale exhibition. The key ethical questions are: “Who can enter?” and “How do they enter?”

♦ A basic ethical concern in curatorial practice is physical accessibility.

Although the traditional *siheyuan* structure poses challenges, I will ensure that each room and entrance is wheelchair-friendly by installing mobile ramps and maintaining open doorways.

♦ To ensure inclusive communication, the exhibition will use bilingual signage (Chinese and English), with all guide texts printed in large fonts, drawing from the V&A Museum’s *Disability Equality Scheme*. All printed materials will use high-contrast, dyslexia-friendly fonts.

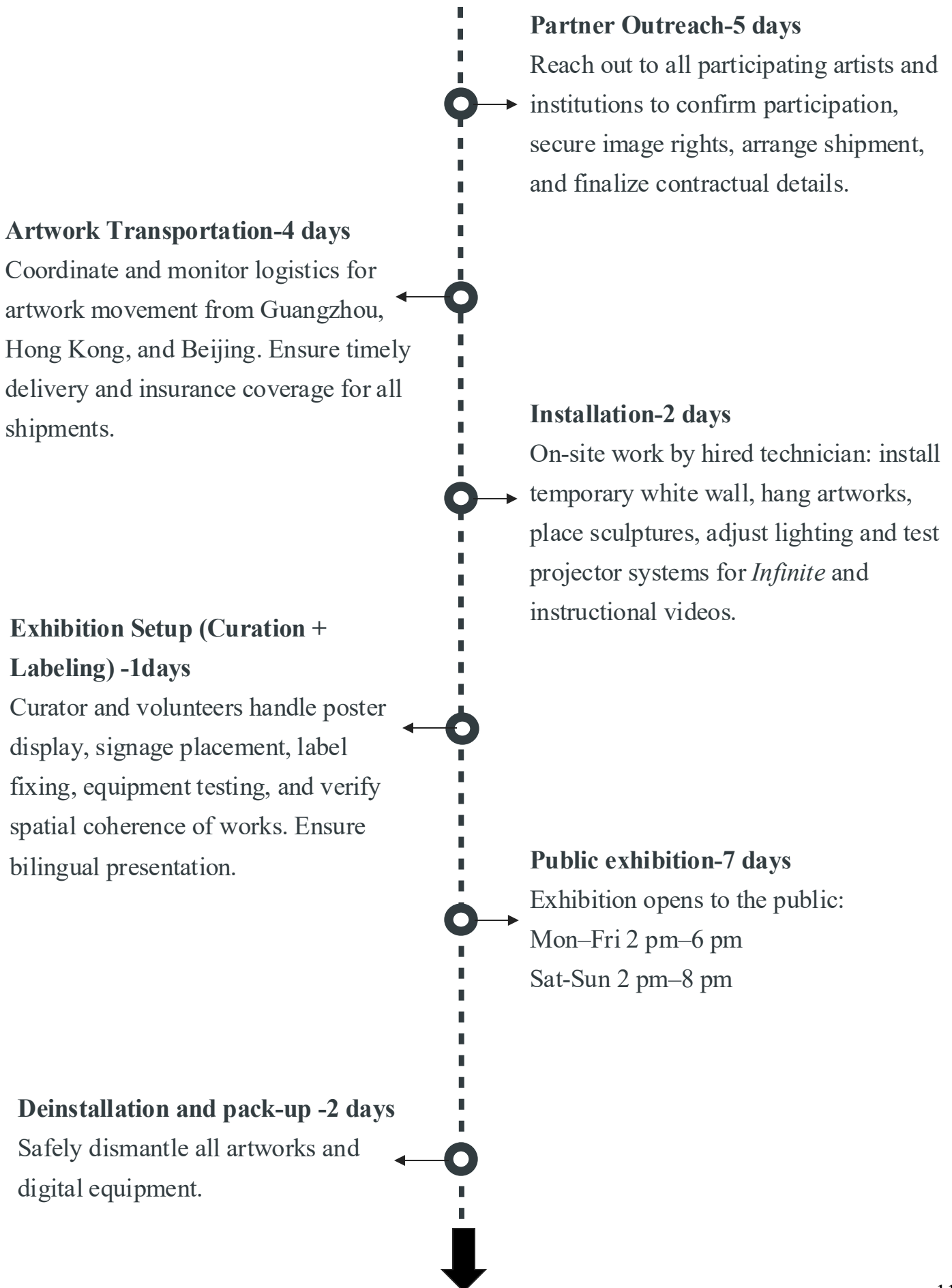
♦ In the interactive zone, materials and low-difficulty instructional videos will be provided, allowing non-art-background visitors, those with lower educational levels, and elderly audiences to truly participate in the paper cutting experience.

♦ Moreover, respecting artists' rights and intellectual property is an ethical imperative. All featured artworks have been licensed either through public platforms or direct communication with the artists, adhering to the ICOM (International Council of Museums, 2017) ethical guidelines. Full credit will be given, and exhibition rights and artist fees are budgeted based on standard payment rates in Beijing.



Example diagram of ramp

# TIMELINE



# BUDGET

Expenditure items	Details	Amount/G BP	Link
Artist fee (including artwork usage rights)	Approximately £525 per artist × 4 artists. Given that there is no unified standard for the pricing of artists' services in mainland China, this project refers to the suggested standards of the Artists' Union Scotland of Scotland, and makes reasonable conversions based on the actual living costs in Beijing.	2100	Artists' Union Scotland Rates <a href="https://www.artistsunion.scot/rates-pay">https://www.artistsunion.scot/rates-pay</a>
Promotional Materials and Guide Systems	Bilingual posters, labels, QR-based audio guides (the audio guide will be recorded by curator)	50	Taobao Printing Services <a href="https://world.taobao.com">https://world.taobao.com</a>
Equipment Rental	Laser cutting machines and projection machines will be available for rental on the official website.	50	<a href="https://m.rzu.com/">https://m.rzu.com/</a>
Video Production	Paper-cutting inheritor fee (1-day filming) ; Student filming/editing team (self-equipped)	100	
Transportation	The transportation and return of artworks are both handled by huolala (a common Chinese transportation company).	650	<a href="https://www.huolala.co/freight">https://www.huolala.co/freight</a>
Installation	2 workers × 6 hrs × 20/hr; includes wall construction and large installations	240	
Volunteer Support	From Tsinghua or CAFA student platforms for setup and interactive zone assistance	0	<a href="https://www.bv2008.cn/app/org/view.php?id=KZbqTLdqi14YN">https://www.bv2008.cn/app/org/view.php?id=KZbqTLdqi14YN</a>
Contingency fund	Emergency costs (material loss, equipment repairs, etc.)	200	
Total		3390	



# Revenue plan

## Funding Support:

I plan to apply for exhibition funding support from **the Beijing Contemporary Art Foundation (BCAF)**. BCAF is the first public welfare art foundation in China that focuses on contemporary humanistic development. It has long been concerned with young curators, socially engaged art practices, and the cultural activation of unconventional exhibition spaces. These directions are highly consistent with my project. The funding contents of BCAF include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Project funding support: for all aspects, such as planning, execution, and promotion of the exhibition.
- ◆ Resource connection: assisting in contacting venues, media, and cooperation institutions, and providing resource support for the implementation of the project.
- ◆ Professional guidance: providing professional suggestions and guidance in curating and artistic creation.

The proposal, budget, and intro will be submitted to: [info@bcaf.org.cn](mailto:info@bcaf.org.cn)

Income item	Details	Amount/GBP
BCAF	<b>Beijing Contemporary Art Foundation</b>	3000
Interactive zone fee	Price: Student-5p; General-10p	500
Own resources		100
Total		3600