

Week 7 | Bringing Home into Exhibition

Category: Uncategorized

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1. Using an Object from Home as a Curatorial Entry Point

This week, Ji Ju Collective continued our discussion at Summerhall. As part of this session, each of us shared an artwork or object connected to our hometown and introduced the cultural background behind it. This exercise was not simply about “showing where we come from.” It also worked as a curatorial method: through a specific object, broader ideas such as identity, locality, memory and culture became visible and discussable.

The object I presented was an amulet from Taiqing Palace in Qingdao. Taiqing Palace, located in Laoshan, Qingdao, is an important site in Chinese Daoist culture. For me, this amulet is not only a religious object. It is also connected to local culture, family memory and forms of spiritual reassurance in everyday life. Bringing it into the collective discussion made me think about how an object that originally belongs to a private and local context of belief changes meaning when it is placed within a curatorial discussion or exhibition setting.

In everyday life, the amulet functions as something associated with protection, blessing and safety. Within the space of collective discussion, however, it also becomes an object to be viewed, interpreted and contextualised. In this sense, it carries both a practical function and a symbolic meaning. It makes visible the idea of the object as a carrier of culture.



Daoist amulet from
Taiqing Palace,
Qingdao. Shared
during Ji Ju
Collective's
discussion at
Summerhall as an
object connecting
hometown culture,
everyday belief and
curatorial thinking.

2. The Amulet Between Practical Meaning and Artistic Meaning

I chose this amulet partly because this year is my benmingnian, or zodiac birth year.

In Chinese culture, one's birth year is often understood as a particularly sensitive or significant period, during which people may pay more attention to protection, safety and wellbeing. Because of this, red objects, amulets and other

symbolic items are often used to express a wish for security and good fortune. Whether this protection is understood as religious, symbolic or emotional, it shows that objects are not only used, but also believed in.

On a practical level, the amulet relates to a sense of safety. It responds to uncertainty in everyday life and reflects how people turn to objects in order to create reassurance when facing pressure, change or the unknown.

From an artistic and curatorial perspective, however, the amulet is more than simply a piece of folk culture. It raises several important questions.

First, can a small, everyday object with a private or spiritual function be taken seriously within an exhibition space?

Second, how should curation provide access when viewers do not share the same cultural background?

Third, does the value of an object come only from its aesthetic form, or also from the cultural relations, lived use and emotional structures it carries?

What interests me most is that this object is not monumental, but specific. It turns culture from an abstract idea into something that can be touched, worn, trusted and narrated. It also reminds me that curatorial thinking does not always need to begin with large theoretical claims. Sometimes it can begin with a very small object and expand outward into broader cultural and social questions.