

Project Book

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Week 1 My Exhibition Inspiration

I hope my exhibition takes place in so-called “peripheral areas. [1]” While the dichotomy of Center–Periphery may seem outdated, it remains undeniably linked to structural violence. This violence can be revealed through art and culture[2]. Through my exhibition, I aim to fulfill culture’s power to show truth[3]. Simultaneously, I hope my exhibition will attract artists and intellectuals to join the urban cultural development of this region. This could break the cycle where only cultural centers attract capital and talent, using these resources to achieve further growth[4]. I also intend to select artworks more closely connected to the people to challenge artistic concepts determined by the higher societal class[5]. For example, displaying local cultural heritage and folk artworks.

I wish to curate my exhibition in the form of a small visual arts organization (SVAO) [6]. SVAOs are structurally small, non-profit spaces that are dedicated both to the production and to the dissemination of contemporary art. They are characterised by an interest in the local community in which they are located and in diverse urban issues ranging from new technologies to the social art practices in their cities. I hope my exhibition venues can include both indoor and outdoor spaces, with indoor areas suitable for displaying text and outdoor areas suitable for showcasing large-scale public art installations.

Therefore, I anticipate that my exhibition could be held in regions bridging rural and urban areas within China. The artworks I select will, as much as possible, be created by locally born artists[7]. Materials and mediums will prioritize locally specific resources, such as reed weaving crafts and clay sculptures reflecting local culture. Alternatively, they may relate to high-tech industries closely tied to the community, like plastic recycling and recycled plastic artifacts[8]. I aim to focus on the daily lives and livelihoods of local communities, using art to promote their pillar industries and unique cultural heritage[9]. This approach will create employment opportunities and increase income for local residents, while also educating audiences about production techniques and craftsmanship[10].

[1] Ronald Kolb, Camille Regli, and Dorothee Richter, "Centres □ Peripheries– Complex Constellations," *Notes on Curating* 41 (June 2019): 3.

[2] Kolb, Regli, and Richter, "Centres □ Peripheries," 6.

Nevertheless, art and culture have the possibility to produce "truth," to reveal and to comment, and they are able to act to a certain extent as a counter-hegemony or, as Adorno and Horkheimer have unmasked so-called cultural industry, art and culture are able to confuse and affectively involve people in false ideas about their conditions.

[3] Kolb, Regli, and Richter, "Centres □ Peripheries," 5.

But culture also has the power to show the truth, which means in this sense always also the truth about production, relations of production processes, and economics. Or, in other words, the concept of hegemony makes it thinkable that counter-hegemony is also possible.

[4] Kolb, Regli, and Richter, "Centres □ Peripheries," 7.

The research undertaken in *Art in the Periphery of the Centre* (2015) by Christoph Behnke, Cornelia Kastelan, Valérie Knoll, and Ulf Wuggenigl draws the hypothesis that cultural centres have organically attracted, over the years, groups of artists and intellectuals who have built the cities' cultural profiles, despite the economic situation.

[5] Kolb, Regli, and Richter, "Centres □ Peripheries," 7.

his idea was already expressed in the '70s and '80s by avantgarde theorists, such as Peter Bürger in *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), 13 in which he extensively refutes the idea of "art as an institution," claiming that art's production and distribution in institutional structures are conditioned by ideas that are determined by the higher societal class—which essentially biases our perception and reception of art. For Bürger, joining Marx's ideas, the institution gets away from the "praxis of life" and is fundamentally detrimental to the meaning of art. Therefore, they say it needs to be closer to the people and to collective craft.

[6] Ana Edurne Bilbao Yarto, *Micro-Curating: The Role of SVAOs (Small Visual Arts Organisations) in the History of Exhibition-Making* (Notebook for Art, Theory and Related Zones, 2018), 120.

In the beginning there is thus a kind of community center or hang-out for friends from the art field. In the regions I am talking about these activities are assuming a quasi-institutional status that often goes hand in hand with an expansion of their activity. They then start to fundraise internationally, to set up residencies, offer research possibilities, invite foreign curators and artists, organize film programs, edit magazines and so on. I call these spaces with quasi-institutional character Small Visual Arts Organisations, hereafter SVAOs.

[\[7\]](#) Bilbao Yarto, *Micro-Curating*, 127.

In some cases, SVAOs were established with the aim of giving unknown local artists a space to make their work visible or to promote their work beyond regional boundaries by connecting them to a larger art international community.

[\[8\]](#) Bilbao Yarto, *Micro-Curating*, 127.

Most significantly, they all share a strong interest in engaging with the local communities where their buildings are located, as well as in tackling local urban issues, including social art practices or new technologies in their cities.

[\[9\]](#) Bilbao Yarto, *Micro-Curating*, 133.

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[\[10\]](#) Bilbao Yarto, *Micro-Curating*, 133.

.....the interest of SVAOs in: Processes over End Products; Networks and Sustainability; Engagement; and Research and Knowledge Production. This means that they share an interest in process-based artistic practices, in research-oriented activities, in arts education and in fostering strong levels of engagement with their publics, mainly their local publics.