

“CONTINUITY & QHAKAZA” : Curator Xie Tian tells how artists reshape the contemporary narrative of intangible cultural heritage under the impact of the trend of The Times



About

Xie Tian(Tim), curator, visual artist, designer, and chief manager of Cloud Art Center, has worked in Beijing Dentsu Advertising Co., LTD and Enjoy Art Museum successively. Major exhibitions/projects planned and participated in by his major: “CONTINUITY”, “ACOUSMA” Online Acoustic Art Experimental Exhibition, “QHAKAZA” GUNS&RAIN Gallery Artists Group Exhibition, EVOLUTION II- Virtual Reality, etc.

Before we talk about these special exhibitions, let's go back to your hometown. Tell me something about your life experience and how you became a curator.

As for my hometown, I grew up in many places, but I did not break away from the Circle of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei. Under the geographical and cultural background, I was taken by my family to tea houses, listen to crosstalk, watch operas, and have a special feeling for traditional culture. When I was still reading children's books, I was fond of looking through the books on the shelves of my elders. What impressed me the most was a design sketch of a stage play of the modern Peking Opera Tiger Mountain by the Way of wisdom. Perhaps it was this enlighten reading that made me more interested in art and design in my later interests. My undergraduate major is a visual art direction, but often like to read the exhibition review related articles and books, and art and the art exhibition gradually from love to have some understanding and thinking, is more from the macroscopic to grasp the exhibition ideas, then later in the graduate student stage has decisively chose professional curator.

How your experience affects the way you work, and how it intersects with the story of the intangible cultural heritage of countries.

1

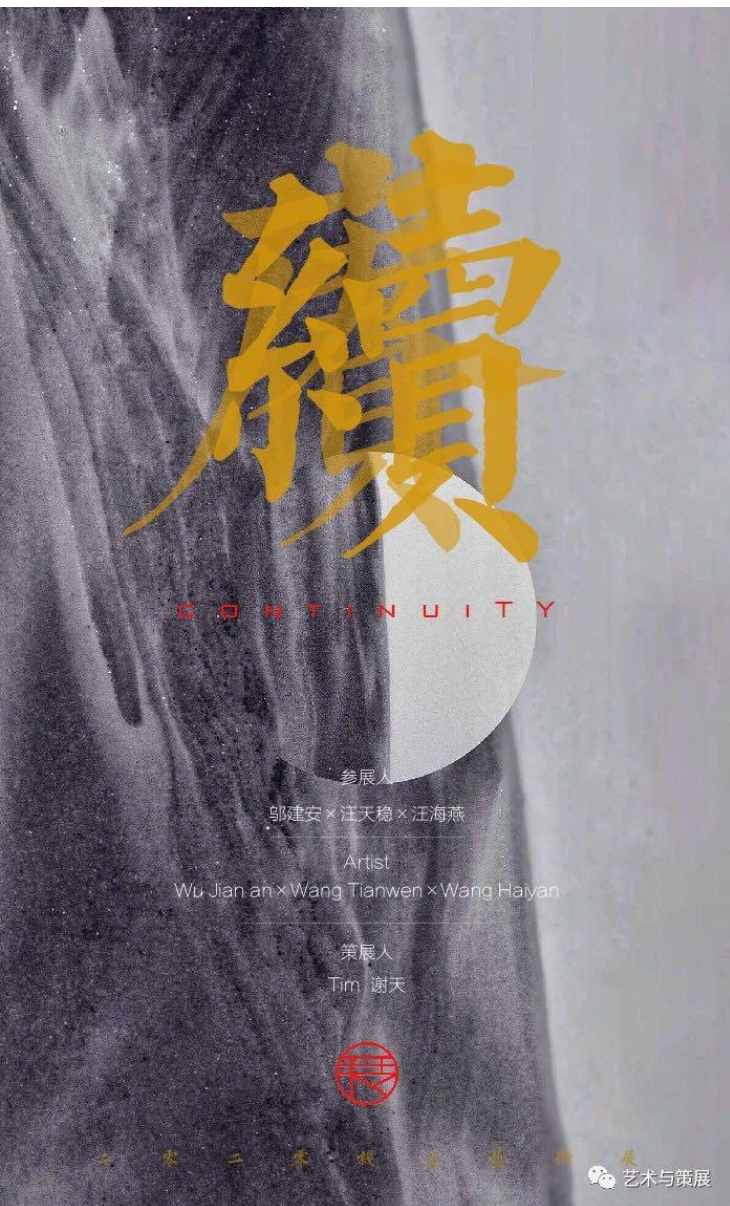
In the early learning process, I participated in a series of Chinese intangible cultural heritage projects, such as the innovation and protection of traditional folk art such as shadow puppetry paper-cut New Year paintings. In the process of research also know a lot of relevant knowledge, the traditional art form can be played so cool, and the art behind the inclusion of culture is also very handsome, and of course as well as some felt sorry endangered craft or art form, so also want to let everyone especially the young people by understanding these art forms, like them, even to the art form can really for people to accept now, think it will have its value, which is more or less with some sense of mission.

What fascinates you about cultural inheritance and development, especially artists' post-production and creation forms that challenge traditional crafts?

About the innovation and development of cultural inheritance or traditional art form is invariable if blindly inheritance is not desirable in today's society, no matter what kind of culture must be along with the social development and change and update, including some we have now defined as the art of traditional art form in it s also trendy fashion, this will create mass communication and higher acceptance. In contemporary times, both scholars, scientists and artists in different industries have promoted the development of the whole cultural context. Therefore, I will pay more attention to the creation forms with elements of traditional skills. Such creation is also a kind of inheritance with contemporaneity, which requires artists to have a deep understanding of traditional culture and be extremely sensitive to the cultural development of modern society. It will be extremely challenging, but it will also have more social significance.



Curator Xie Tian and artist Gu Wenda



Let's talk about "CONTINUITY", you have recently one of exhibition projects, also is your first choice through online in shadow play this kind of Chinese traditional folk art forms in the context of contemporary art in the inheritance and the evolution of tone for planning of the exhibition, in this kind of intense collision, you turned it into an artist of "new shadow play" self-renewal of a response. Can you talk a little bit about how you've built a way to do that?

"CONTINUITY" exhibition poster, The photo by: the art and curatorial public platform

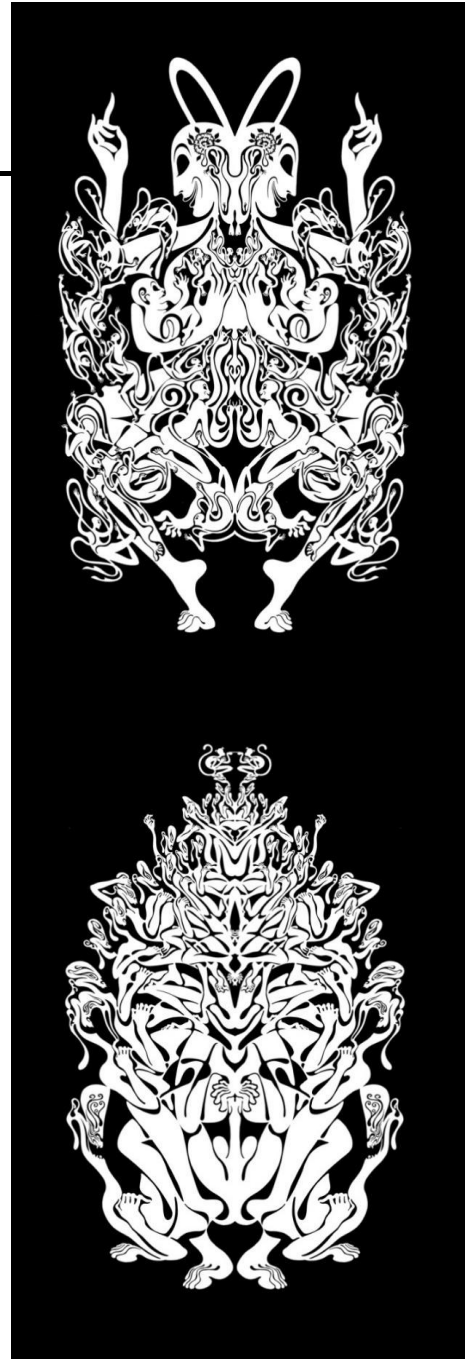
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CONTINUITY was an online exhibition I planned during home quarantine, which was also a response to home office and online cloud exhibition during the special period of the global epidemic. Based on some previous research directions of shadow puppetry, I paid more attention to art works and artists related to shadow puppetry. I learned that the large amount of time spent at home due to the epidemic created conditions for many shadow puppetry sculpture artists and inheritors to create more thoughtful works. Some conforms to the trend of The Times or reaction current creative works have been created, this time I want to through their own efforts to let more people to know these artists do, has spawned the concept of *CONTINUITY* of this exhibition, *CONTINUITY*, to continue, both in the exhibition display of selecting related contemporary art of shadow play and shadow play, or the choice of the three participating artists, is a relationship of inheritance development, continue to the concept of. Through the creation and design of this traditional art form in the context of contemporary art, it also reflects the possibility of innovation and development of some intangible cultural heritage projects in some fields of modern society.

In this exhibition project, do you have any artists and the stories behind their works to be introduced?

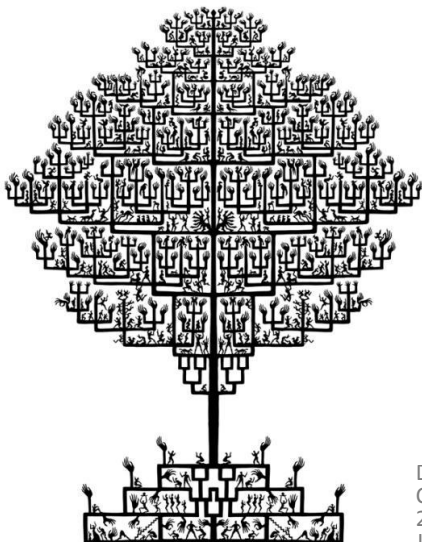
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I would like to introduce the works of the artist Jianwen Wu of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. He appropriately integrated this traditional art form, such as shadow puppetry and paper cutting, into contemporary art creation, as well as many myths and legends. His strong cultural identification impressed the audience very much. He wrote a series of works "Daydream" in 17 years ago, during the COVID-19 broke out in Beijing. He alone in the studio, sensitive and fear, from the external environment and disease turned inward looking for comfort and sustenance of mind created a Daydream this a series of images, those images is like the period unreal friends with artists for panic, but also represents the individual spirit in the face of a kind of response to the catastrophic crisis, though to the image shows a false invisible "truth" of the existence of living. The exhibition of this work during the current global COVID-19 epidemic is timely, but it also conveys the continuation and pursuit of hope



Daydream series of mental comforts, Ancient balance spring, 136x77cm, 2003-2004. Photo source: Office website of Jianwen Wu's studio

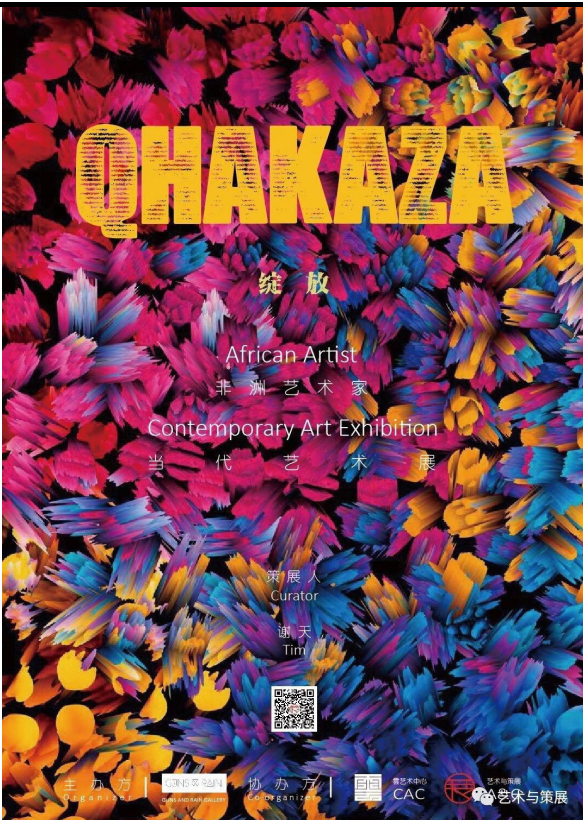
Daydream series with split character, Clip xuan carve, 136x77cm, 2003-2004. Photo source: Office website of Jianwen Wu's studio



Daydream series of bumper harvest, Clip xuan carve, 136x77cm, 2003-2004. Photo source: Office website of Jianwen Wu's studio

Let me talk about your collaboration with GUNS&RAIN Gallery on "QHAKAZA" of contemporary art in Africa. How did you first learn about the new forms of traditional African handicraft culture in the contemporary context and the works of artists?

"QHAKAZA" exhibition poster, The photo by: the art and curatorial public platform



5

African artists in this exhibition are GUNS & RAIN agent, the gallery from Johannesburg to support a lot of African artists from all countries, many artists have various identity and background, and most suffered because of the suffering caused by Africa's unique political and economy, the environment, the artist will be more sensitive, and its unique experience as a source of inspiration for creation. Like some artists who have several jobs at the same time because they want to make a living, the sparks of inspiration from different perspectives can make their works more unique and moving.

Although Africa's unique "primitive art" has always provided a continuous driving force for the creation of many Western art schools, such as brutalism, cubism, expressionism and abstraction, African art itself has always been in a supporting role, mostly placed in the position of "Muse". With the globalization of the art market, modern and contemporary African art works have gradually stepped onto the stage of the western mainstream art world. All kinds of signs show that with the continuous development of African economy, the form and inner nature of African art have been further improved. Based on its special humanistic history and background as well as the current social situation, its art works reflect more profoundly the common problems in human society. In general, contemporary art from Africa has been on the rise in the art market in recent years. The combination of some unique traditional art forms and contemporary art is also an experimental case for other countries and regions to learn from.

What kind of contemporary artists do you think are produced by the "relatively extreme and unstable environment" in Africa, and how do they shape the way they see the world and present themselves?



Entanglement I (in collaboration with Pinky Moyo), Dishcloth, string, digital printing and acrylic ,2019,50 x 50cm (bottom frame mounted)

Let's look at the artist in the exhibition *Bev Butkow Entanglement* series of paintings, I'd like to point out one thing, in her discussion women work achievement and unequal social expectations, with a strong narrative through the special composite material on behalf of the national identity and the African traditional process experiment, she seemed to make the image more powerful in this trend, can you talk about do you feel about this combination?

Entanglement II (in collaboration with Pinky Moyo),Dishcloth, string, digital printing and acrylic, 2019,50 x 50cm (bottom frame mounted)

Entanglement III ,Wood and glass beads, fish intestines, string, digital printing and acrylic,2019



6

Bev's works explore the expectations of society towards women, the results of women's labor and their easily neglected characteristics. In traditional weaving, there is a rebellion against structured control and then re-control. Challenge and show the pressure, expectations, and rules that women are forced to show an inauthentic side of themselves. Composite

materials, creative creative processes and personal narratives combine to make sense of questions surrounding gender labor and thoughts about the female body. She explores the female labor experience and the class framework of the studio through tangled materials, creative production processes, and works co-created by hired studio assistants. At the same time, her work embodies the ideas of working women and the hierarchy of power between artists and their assistants. The theme of the female community is prospected, and the female body is a place where knowledge is deposited and formed from the small events of everyday life. Bev's works achieve multilayered narratives with complex surfaces, alluding to contemporary society and life through traditional weaving methods that emphasize women's work.

In the context of global cultural hybridization, do you think intangible heritage such as Chinese shadow puppetry and African textile craft will be more acceptable to the public in creation and transformation or will they gradually lose their own meaning?

Intangible cultural heritage of traditional art is the human gene pool, has great inspiration and research significance, but it along with the social progress, the development of globalization, some historical period of the traditional art form is dying in the process, if it is difficult to adapt to the rapid forward same world, so will the traditional gradually became modern popular, let more people to accept them, how to change, how to change, what we should think about things.

In these two exhibitions, you used online as the display form. What impact do you think the crisis of COVID-19 will have on the cultural values and creative media of contemporary intangible cultural heritage creators?

Global outbreak of the new coronavirus indeed for all walks of life have caused a huge impact, but also created some chances, for art of intangible heritage or artist, this is a good chance of creation and research with great concentration, the good news is that it is during the outbreak, many folk artists through social software or video share they are doing to the world and for the same home quarantine viewers the unique art.

I know that you are running an online art and curatorial platform independently. Is this a new mode of thinking brought to you in the post-mass media era? And what direction do you think the orientation of curators in galleries and art institutions will develop in the future?

8

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Curation now seems to be moving away from the traditional framework of galleries, biennales and fairs and towards a business model. "Do traffic first, do business later". This is more like the operation state of an advertising or pr company. To some extent, the role of curators in the role of flow is an affirmation of the occupation of "curators" by the business.

When curators step out of the art circle and enter into different fields, they intersect with shopping malls, real estate, tourism and other industries, which in turn stimulate the curatorial industry, not only broaden the creative field of curators, but also deconstruct the traditional definition of curators and put them in a more unknown situation. Back to the art ecosystem, the role of curators is not as simple as organizing an exhibition. To find artists, academic organization and value orientation are the basic consensus for curators to establish a foothold in the art industry. If these "meta-functions" of curation are lost, "curation commercialization" will become an empty shell.
