



“Keeping an ongoing focus on social issues in China and turning art media into social activities, artist Dan Wang talks about her artistic creations and related concepts in recent years”

Dingyi Feng, November 5, 2020

**Art Interview:
Dan Wang's
reflections and
artistic practices
on currency,
architecture,
cameras and
antibiotics**

First let's talk about your hometown, your life experience and how to become an artist.

I was born in a small town in Guizhou province. Until I went to high school, I went to live in Chongqing, big city. There are some different between small town and big city, I like to find these different points, they make me to think what's happen in our life, because if people get use to their life, they don't realize that something has completely turned our lives upside down, but the living situation of people in two regions are contrasted, the difference is striking. I feel these different points and try to express my attitude.

Can you talk about your Alma mater? How did it influence your art? How did you move from painting to more artistic media?

In my BA course, I studied in oil painting in Sichuan fine art institute in Chongqing. My old school is an active school, my tutor always given us full freedom for practice, I can try different medium and material to finished my practice. I often to visited gallery during the time of ba course, many art work were displayed in gallery, just like decoration, I started to thought how art work influence people. And the same time, I knew more artists and their work, I came to feel that drawing didn't satisfy the conception I wanted to express, I hope to use better way to display my idea.

In your works, I can see that you keep paying close attention to the social issues in China. How does this attraction come into being in your mind?

Actually, I think I just focus on whats happen in our life, whats change our life, im sure everything happens for some reasons. For example, we can't study in school now, reason is covid-19, then we can use computer and online to study, because the rapid development of technology and scient support to us study at anywhere. In my opinion, there are some reasons and changes are unreasonable and ridiculous, I want to express my view for them. And I think a lot of little behavior make up the social activities of the world, when I try to understand these behaviors and why do people do these behaviors, I just try to understand this world.

Some time ago, I saw your project of currency exchange on your social platform. Could you talk about the content of this project and what do you think of the conceptual feedback and value brought by this exchange? 2

Of course, in practice, I set up a stall to sell paper money, and people can buy them at the same price through wechat and Alipay qr code in August. In the four to five years before this work, I almost didn't use any paper money, I would use online payment, bank card and various apps to complete payment. The idea first came to mind in June, during the covid-19, various prohibitions have delayed the practice until august. During which time the street-stall economy has become a national topic. In the past decade, it has been largely forbidden to set up stalls in any city in china. Merchants need to apply for various permits to set up stalls, but now because covid-19, the government changed policy. As long as they go to the permitted area, they are free to set up their stalls. This is something I didn't expect, but it surprised me. This led me to finally go out on the street to finish this work.

In my opinion, money is a symbol for the transaction of goods. In the past, people used shells, gold and silver as money, and then they invented COINS and checks to replace them. Now there are more convenient ways for people to conduct transactions through the Internet. I want to record a situation of money now.



The plan of currency, Art performance, Chongqing, 2020

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As far as I know there are very few dimes and fifty cents in the market now, so have you been trying to keep them in your life? I wonder how long they have been with you?



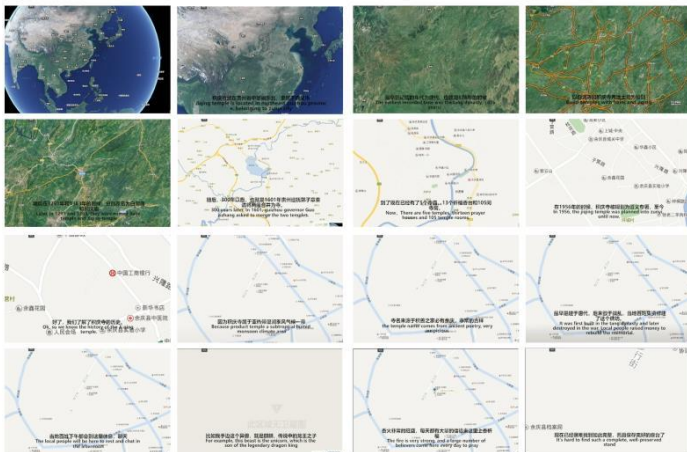
The plan of currency, Art performance, Chongqing, 2020

These paper moneys come from my mother's purse, because not everyone in the market can use software to collect money, some old people will sell fresh vegetables and meat in the local market, at this time my mother will have some cash buy them. Ten-cent and fifty-cent notes are now in circulation, but the older people are more willing to go to the local market to buy vegetables, but most of the young people will choose to go to the supermarket to buy vegetables, so the young people feel that they seldom see such small denomination money. I often see people put the small denomination money directly into the donation box after they buy things. I think it's because of the small denomination that people ignore them.

Let's talk about your imitation of the ancient building Jiqing Temple. You took it as a fictional tourist attraction, imitated it as a tour guide, and constructed a relatively real narrative environment. Then, what was the opportunity that triggered your art?

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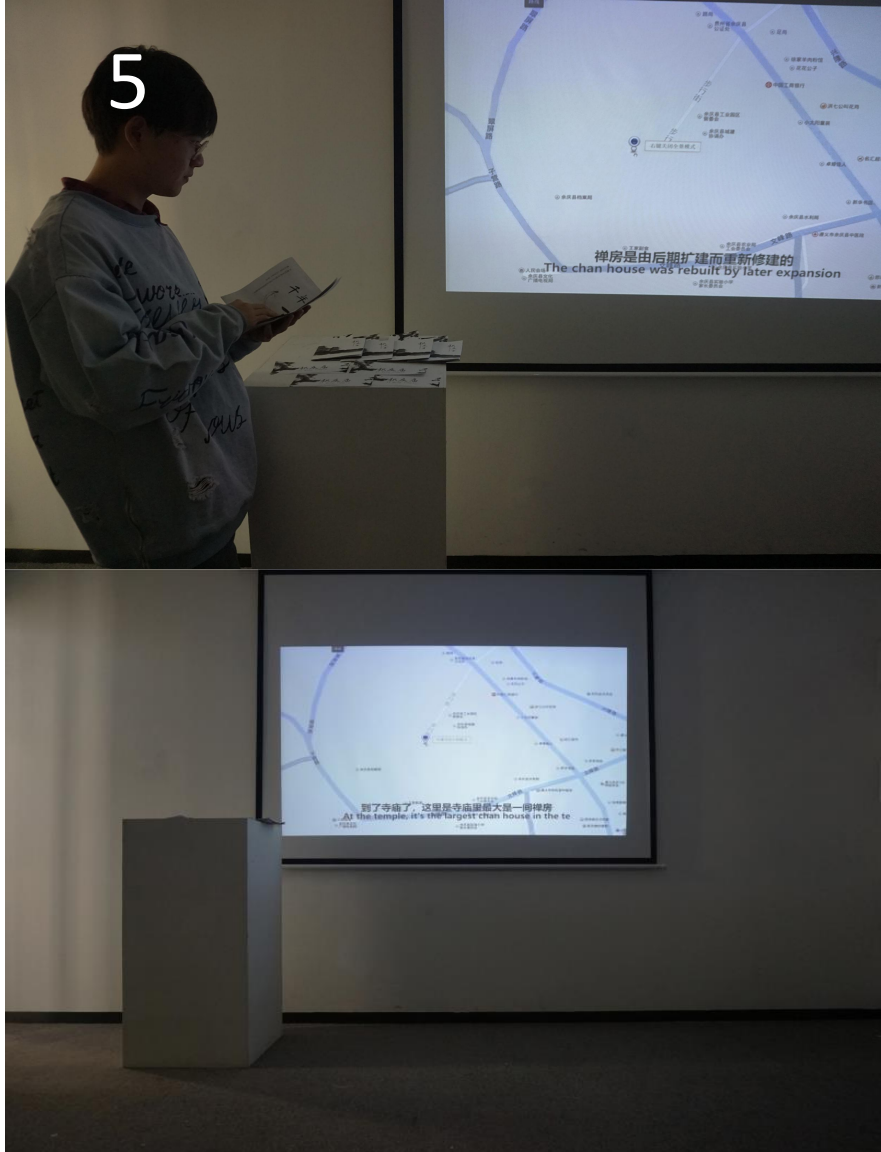
I like travelling, when I arrive a new place, I will see historical building, I found many problems. As we know, the material used in Chinese traditional building are wood, stone, brick and oil paint, but I found a lot of modern material used in building of the scenic spot, and the tour guide and scenic spot said it was a real ancient building. So I did research, i found many businessman and government copy ancient building for money, local people knew it was fake. The same time, I focused on a government building near my house, the government decided rebuilding an ancient building to attract tourist, I got that there was a real ancient building here 40 years ago in a same place, which makes this thing (rebuilding an ancient building) particularly ridiculous, I had a practice plan in short time. I used network map to build virtual scenic spot, using the identity of a tour guide makes the audience feel more representative and makes the practice more absurd.



Jiqing Temple, Video, Beijing, 2018

How do you see the relationship between time and space, between reality and fiction?

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Jiqing Temple, Video, Beijing, 2018

In the same place, as time goes on, things and people are constantly changing. This reason why real ancient building is important. In this work, I can say that history is real, but I construct a false history. Its mean that in the guide words in my fictional video, the time and name are all true. I read the history books of my hometown, but all the stories are false. I made up a fictional history with these real historical details. Just like copy ancient building, they look like real historical buildings, but they are made of modern materials.

So, why did you choose dialect as one of the narrative techniques of the image?

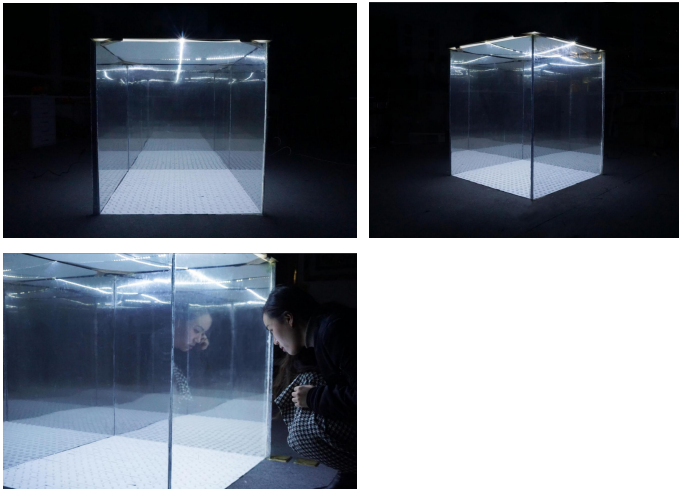
Chinese is very special. Only China is used as the mother tongue. It has unique characteristics. Basically, every city has its own dialect in china. I hope people who watch it have a sense of substitution and authenticity through dialect and tour guide words, which is in sharp contrast to the virtual network map video.



Symbiosis, installation view, Beijing, 2017

I am very interested in the special curtain device with monitoring images you produced, especially if you used "Symbiosis" as the title of this project. Could you please talk about how you were attracted by it?

People always emphasize personal privacy, but in reality, it is impossible to avoid being monitored, especially in public places. I'm constantly exploring the changing relationship between people and monitoring devices. Many people hold strange attitudes towards the issue of surveillance. For example, when people talk about surveillance, they will be associated with some negative words. Some people even think it is something that people with unhealthy mentality will do, but at the same time they think it is safe to be under surveillance equipment, especially near cash machines. It's a contradictory conception, so I choose this word to express the situation of the monitoring device.

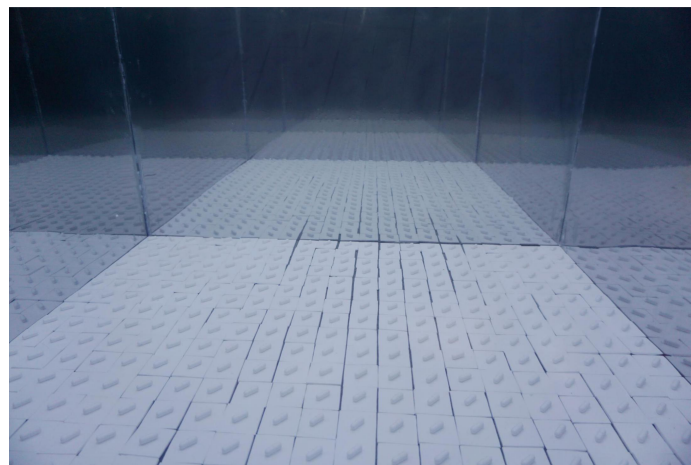


7 I was drawn to the visual experience of seeing the light and the glass reflecting device itself as an endless channel of antibiotic medicine. Did you have any such considerations in the medium selection of the device?

Can you talk a little bit about the program on antibiotic purpose, and briefly explain what kind of social problem that is, and how you define the connection between antibiotics and the graveyard.

I made this installation by plaster, light and single mirror. I've tried many times to achieve this effect, when people watch it around, they will see endless pills. It's like a magic box, once the box is opened, these pills will spread all over the world. I hope this feeling will lead people to reflect on the abuse of antibiotics.

Antibiotics are not strictly controlled in China, which leads to serious abuse of antibiotics. Many people don't understand the consequences of antibiotic abuse, and some even don't care. When antibiotics are ineffective in the treatment of superbugs, there will be an immeasurable risk. The birth of antibiotics saves many people's lives and is regarded as a miracle drug. But at the same time, the abuse of antibiotics also leads to more and more human body to produce super virus, which can not be treated. Antibiotics and graveyard have the same relationship as life and death.



Graveyard - Antibiotic, installation view, Beijing, 2017

I see that the exhibition form of your works is more away from the fixed exhibition space like the gallery, and goes deeper into the crowd and social activities. These audiences or participants may also be becoming a part of your works. Does this uncertainty bring you considerable value and influence in your creation process?

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Is COVID-19 having an impact on your more participatory form of art, and are you trying to make the transition to other forms of art?

In fact, it doesn't have any impact on my practice. I've never fixed the way of my art practice, I just try different medium and material, I painted oil painting and digital painting during the time of covid-19, I was interested in how to combine digital painting and traditional painting. At the same time, I have finished my practice, which is the practice we mentioned above to sell paper money on the street.

Uncertain factors become an important part in my work, I got a real reflection from people. In my opinion, when a work of art cannot arouse people's thinking, it becomes an ornament, which means it has lost its meaning. But how to influence people by art work, I think this a good way to invite people join my practice.