Experimental Beijing

Gender and Globalization in Chinese Contemporary Art

Sasha Su-Ling Welland

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for those we have loved and lost
who promise life after life
who leave us world after world

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NOTE ON THE DIGITAL COMPANION

A website created in conjunction with *Experimental Beijing* features expanded multimedia materials, including chapter image galleries, documentary videos, curated exhibits, interactive maps, and an archive of artists and images searchable in Chinese and English. Designed to complement and visually deepen the experience of reading the book, the digital platform also provides readers with a nonlinear way to explore the image worlds discussed within. It highlights relationships among images, in which the form and meaning of one is shaped by others, as database searches and curated exhibits open new sight lines and modes of inquiry.

To access the website, go to: **experimentalbeijing.com**

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MAP FM.01 Map of China. Designed by Tim Stallmann.

1

He was born in 1895, son to a farmer turned self-taught artist. He and his father scraped by as itinerant portrait painters. He was seventeen when his father arranged his marriage, although his wife fell ill and died young. After his father died, he made his way to Shanghai, where he studied painting and dreamed of Paris. He found a patron, a Jew from Baghdad married to a wealthy Shanghai real estate magnate. In 1917, she sent him to study in Japan. In 1919, he shipped off to Paris with a new wife who had run away from an arranged marriage. He attended the École des Beaux-Arts and copied Prud'hon, Delacroix, Velázquez, Rembrandt. When his scholarship money ran low, his wife supported his study of the great European masters by sewing piecework embroidery for the Magasins du Louvre. He returned to China as a celebrated salon painter with bohemian hair, velvet coat, and cravat tied in a bow at his neck. His paintings blended traditional Chinese brush technique with the figurative realism of his European training.[1]

She was born in 1895, orphaned at a young age, and sent to live with her uncle. He sold her as a teenager into a brothel, where she gained the sympathies of a wealthy customs official. He already had a wife from an arranged marriage, so she became his concubine. He gave her a heart locket with their photos in it, which she wore around her neck. Recognizing her talent, he sent her to art school in Shanghai. In 1919, she won a government scholarship to study abroad. During an eight-year sojourn in Europe, she studied in Lyon, Paris, and Rome. She returned to China and exhibited eighty works in her first solo exhibition, which drew crowds in Ningbo. The First National Art Exhibition of 1929 in Shanghai included five of her paintings in oil and gouache. While she received acclaim for her realist depiction, her brushwork and use of color showed the influence of modernists like Cézanne and Matisse.[2]

Xu Beihong became head of painting at the newly established National Central University in Nanjing and hired Pan Yuliang to teach under his direction. In a photograph of the faculty, they stand side by side on a campus lawn: she with her Western suit and strapped heels, a book clutched in her arm; he with his parted hair and floppy cravat, a dark coat and hat clutched in his arm. Former École des Beaux-Arts classmates, they shared an academic training in oil painting. Xu held fast to this tradition while Pan pushed its boundaries in explorations of female subjectivity. In an incendiary review of the 1929 National Art Exhibition, Xu championed academic realism against the "despicable, muddle-headed, dark and corrupted elements" of modernism.[3]

The Art Movement Society, founded by other overseas students returned from France, responded to this call to arms with a manifesto. It declared, "Artists should not confine their views within national boundaries, nor should different schools attempt to turn competition into a domestic conflict! It is our belief, therefore, that artists of this new era should study the art of all nations with a global perspective. Any art, not limited to the art of Europe, but extending to the art of the Philippines and Australia, deserves our attention as long as we can learn from it."[4]

In the years to follow, the clash between Nationalists and Communists reached a violent crescendo that engulfed the politics of aesthetic conflict. Left-wing members of organizations like the Morning Flower Society—whose woodcut movement drew on German Expressionism, Soviet engraving, and Japanese printmaking—were shot dead.[5] Morality campaigns meant to enforce social order attacked the behavior of modern girls like the painter of sensuous nudes, with her cropped hair and strapped heels. While no extant evidence supports the story of Pan Yuliang's domestic downfall, it circulates in the popular imagination: that someone defaced a painting of a male nude in her last exhibit in China and left a note describing the work as "praise from a prostitute to a brothel frequenter."[6] She turned her back on these critics for a studio on rue Vercingétorix in Paris, where she lived the remaining decades of her life.

Xu Beihong rode the storm and emerged a national artist and patriot. He held exhibits and sold paintings throughout South and Southeast Asia to raise funds for Chinese war relief. In Darjeeling, he sketched the Indian models whose figures fill his large-scale ink painting of the Chinese parable about a foolish old man intent on moving the mountain blocking his view. He was named the first president of Beijing's Central Academy of

Fine Art and stood on the rostrum with Mao Zedong when he announced the birth of the People's Republic of China.

These are well-known, worldly fables, honed from the remains of history, of artistic recognition and rejection. They refute the fable of a China closed to the world until the post-Mao era of economic reform and linking tracks with transnational capitalism. And they haunted the neighborhood where I lived from 2000 to 2002 during my fieldwork on Chinese contemporary art worlds.

It was a short walk from my Xinjiekou apartment in Xicheng District to the Xu Beihong Memorial Hall, opened in 1983 after the original museum in the artist's house was demolished for subway construction. A hush enveloped the gated museum, a grey compound of stone and concrete set back from a street bustling with commerce. A bronze statue of Xu, palette and brushes in hand, presided in front. In a glass-encased re-creation of his studio, a pair of vertical large-character scrolls hung on the wall. This poetic couplet in the artist's calligraphy echoed the words of Lu Xun, made famous by Mao in his pronouncements on art and society: "Fierce-browed, I coolly defy a thousand pointing fingers, / Head bowed, like a willing ox I serve the children."

In the DVD shop across the street overflowing with shelves and boxes of indiscriminately mixed films from China and around the world, I bought a copy of *Hua hun* (A soul haunted by painting), the biopic of Pan Yuliang that brought her back from a grave in Montparnasse to the public consciousness of her home country.[7] When an exhibit of her work appeared at the nearby Cultural Palace of Minorities in 2002, it was a small and short-lived affair. The show featured the decorative ink paintings of dancing figures she had produced toward the end of her life. A nod to Orientalism, a survival tactic, or perhaps a nostalgic nod to her distant youth. Notably absent were the fierce-browed self-portraits in deft, bold strokes of oil she had painted of herself staring confrontationally at the pointing fingers that had driven her to a small room in Paris.

2

Several months after moving to Xinjiekou, I finally walked past the statue of Xu Beihong into his memorial hall. There I met a man whose job was to explain old paintings and photographs to the few visitors who made their

way to the dusty museum. He guided me under the florescent lighting of the exhibit halls and described how a hawk crouched to push off in flight represented the Chinese determined to fight Japanese invaders, how toiling workers moving a mountain represented the heroic feat of socialist revolution. He asked where I was from, what I did, and how I'd learned to speak Chinese. He pondered the discovery of my mixed-blood Chinese American background, the fact that my grandparents had left China, never to return, before the war and revolution. We exchanged business cards, and three days later, he called. He told me he found it interesting that as an anthropologist my job was to talk to people about their lives. He asked me to come back. He felt he had something to tell me.

He sat me down in the lobby of the museum and launched into a discussion of political censorship of art in China. Would this happen in the United States? In a swerve that caught me off balance, he raised a rhetorical question about the high rate of divorce in the United States. He told me this was right. I'd be a fool to believe someone would love me for my whole life. Then he asked me if I felt more Chinese or more American.

"Do you feel discriminated against, for being Chinese there or foreign here?" Not waiting for my response, he declared loudly, spittle flying, "I have always been discriminated against."

And then the story came pouring out:

> My parents were both high-ranking cadres in an army unit. When I was young, I learned to drive and to shoot, but then my parents were denounced, and my brother and I became black elements. Everyone spat upon us, and we wandered the streets with nowhere to call home. I could sing then. I could have been a "beautiful voice," but I chose boxing instead. I wanted to fight to defend myself from attackers. My mother lived in a pigsty for ten years while I learned to knock people down. After my parents were rehabilitated, I became a bodyguard. I could run fast, and I already knew how to drive and handle guns. I worked for gangsters, but you wouldn't believe what I've seen if I told you. I worked for the government, but I can't tell you whom I've protected. My initial assignment in the Cultural Bureau was to be the driver for this artist's widow.

"Then how did you become a museum docent?" I asked.

He lowered his voice and whispered, "I'm just hiding out here. That's what's great about people in the Cultural Bureau. Lots of us, we learn to retreat from outside life and build up our strength. Don't you know what I am?"

I shook my head.

"I am a crouching tiger, hidden dragon."

As I walked home to my apartment, rented from a woman named Art Soldier, the daughter of retired Cultural Bureau workers, herself recently divorced and remarried, who had moved on from her work-unit housing to the domestic fantasy of a new commodity apartment, I kept looking over my shoulder.

Chinese Contemporary Art in the Expanded Field

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 1990s, no named Chinese artist had ever participated in the Venice Biennale, one of the most prestigious and longest-running international art shows in the world.[1] In 1999, twenty Chinese artists—the most from any single country—showed more than fifty visual artworks at the Forty-Eighth Biennale.[2] This historic shift reflected the post-1989 circulation of contemporary art from China in Hong Kong, Japan, Europe, and the United States, as well as the erratic but gradual loosening of political control of art in China. By the early 2000s, Chinese cities such as Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, and Shanghai had adopted the "biennale" model, seen as a marker of cultural cosmopolitanism, and began launching large contemporary art exhibits of their own. During this period of change, an almost uniformly male cohort of artists, noted for their bad boy political dissent, garnered attention on the international museum circuit and art market. Overseas observers heralded their work as representative of reform-era China. Their female counterparts, many of whom had trained alongside them in state-supported art academies, remained in the long shadow cast by this international spotlight on a masculinist avant-garde.

Several contending narratives framed this explosion of Chinese contemporary art on the international stage. Exhibition in the West rescued and recuperated Chinese artists suppressed by an authoritarian government. Or, this phenomenon represented a radical reversal of socialist China's art system and new opening to "the world." Or, it demonstrated China's national triumph on the global cultural scene. Indeed, by 2005, China had its own national pavilion at the Venice Biennale.[3] By 2011, when India organized its first pavilion, anxiety crept into Western reportage. The *Guardian*'s coverage of this moment leads with a vaguely accusatory tone: "Not content with their status as nascent economic superpowers, China and India are set to storm a very European cultural bastion, the Venice Biennale."[4]

Ai Weiwei, the most globally recognized artist to emerge from this period, gained such stature *because* he crosscut and emblematized these

narrative logics. He left China in 1981 and returned over a decade later with New York art world credibility. In 2000, he cocurated *Fuck Off*, a satellite exhibit, shut down by authorities, to the first international Shanghai Biennale. By 2003 he was official consultant to the Swiss architecture firm Herzog and de Meuron on their design for the Beijing Olympics National "Bird's Nest" stadium. He then flipped the state off—through public art projects critical of official hypocrisy and maleficence—with such flagrant style that he landed in jail.[5] He became the ultimate in bad boy political dissent, enabling the West to still feel edgy and free as exhibits like his 2014 *@Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz* stormed a decommissioned outpost of the U.S. prison industrial complex, rejuvenating the worn tourist attraction. Sometimes it seemed he was all that was left standing after the boom.

Experimental Beijing challenges conventional narratives of rescue, reversal, or arrival through an ethnographic account of art world transition grounded in everyday experience and struggle rather than landmark exhibits and events. It examines the social role of art and competing ideas of aesthetic, cultural, and market value in reform-era China. And it does so with a feminist attentiveness to power dynamics in the work of art under the cultural conditions of late socialism–late liberalism that characterized China's shifting position in the world.

The conjunction of late socialism-late liberalism signals the interrelation of these two social projects from the 1980s on.[6] Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping (1978–1989), the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) advanced the ideology of "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," which espoused market economics not as an abandonment of Marxism but as a commitment to the primary stage of socialism necessary for the future potentiality of communism. This reform of Maoist politics rejected the former utopian belief that modernization of productive forces through the market could be bypassed. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the CCP legitimated its rule through new forms of governmentality and integration with neoliberalism as it unfolded in other parts of the world. State-owned enterprises were dismantled and sold off, and new public-private coalitions increasingly managed the provision of social services from housing to health care. Official institutions disseminated a wide-ranging discourse on *suzhi* (quality) in which market success came to serve as the measure of individual and social value. Overall economic growth brought with it mounting material disparity and dispossession, as well as the suppression of protest in the name of social stability and the road to communism. Chinese neoliberal-

ism provincialized the Western belief in market capitalism as linked with liberal democracy. The resulting crisis in legitimacy contributed to late liberalism, in which nations understood as liberal democracies justified their unequal distribution of livelihood through the invocation of cultural difference and need for civilizational securitization, in the name of future freedom for all. *Experimental Beijing* documents this historical, experimental era in China, in which cultural production came to matter as a means of integration, legitimation, differentiation, and contestation. Some of the aesthetic experiments this moment gave rise to have become monumental, others ephemeral.

The global rise of Chinese contemporary art coincided with official efforts to stage spectacular international events, such as the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and the Shanghai World Expo in 2010, to attract the world's attention and signal the end of a colonial first-world, third-world order of things. While often understood as distinct, mutually antagonistic realms of social activity, contemporary art and Chinese state politics increasingly overlapped. After the 1989 crackdown on protests in Tiananmen Square, a censorious attitude had characterized official response to contemporary art. During the lead-up to the Olympics, this circumspection gave way to a new market-driven, culture industry valuation of art. Experimental artists who felt the brunt of Cultural Bureau control throughout the 1990s, when Public Security officials routinely shut down "avant-garde" exhibits, suddenly found themselves courted to advance China's image on the global stage.[7] Exhibition spaces generating new middle-class distinction eclipsed state-controlled museums whose dictate had been to exhibit the art of proletarian revolutionary nationalism. State planners, frequently operating in the changing economy as semicorporate entities, began to invite artists once lauded by foreign promoters as dissident visionaries to run new museums, create work for Beijing's new airport, and design Olympic monuments, firework displays, and ceremony spectacles. The early years of the twenty-first century served as a turning point for Chinese contemporary art and a moment of continual reassessment and reflection by artists caught up in the processes of cultural marketization driven by intersecting local, national, and global forces.

Their activity, centered in China's rapidly transforming "global cities," occurred in tandem with revaluations of rural and urban space, public and private boundaries, and masculinity and femininity.[8] Through participant observation from 2000 to 2002, predominantly in Beijing, I came to understand Chinese contemporary art not as a bounded object but a zone of

cultural encounter in which these revaluations were represented, worked out, and questioned. Its participants included artists, officials, urban planners, cultural consultants, and art professionals from around the world who, in repeated encounters in China and abroad, negotiated what counts as Chinese and what counts as art. In debates about women and art, they negotiated what counts as feminist. While the frame of encounter ostensibly characterizes this early twenty-first-century moment, how artists navigated shifting flows of art discourse also reveals historical encounters and contradictions in understandings of what art is meant to do. As I detail in the three parts of this book—Art Worldings, Zones of Encounter, and Feminist Sight Lines—artists adapted to the changing ideological context for art production but not without a struggle over the politics of form and how it positioned them in relation to the nation and the world, the past and the future.

At Large in the Global City

Wang Nengtao's 2002 panoramic photograph *Subversion–Earth* captures the scale of construction that permeated Beijing, as well as other Chinese megacities, at the turn of the millennium (plate 1).[9] Massive yellow cranes punctuate the scene. They jut into the sky and recede in grey tones toward a smoggy horizon. In the expanse of worksites below, demarcated by green mesh fencing, sandbag walls, and piles of rebar, workers in yellow helmets appear miniature. The piece's long horizontal format resembles a traditional Chinese scroll painting, but rather than inviting the viewer's eye to meander through a natural landscape, with resting spots along the way for reflection, its perspectival, photographic realism insists on a survey from above, of an anonymous multitude turning over the earth in an ideological remaking—a re-worlding—of Chinese social life.[10] Wang's title hints at how such monumental efforts destabilized past political projects, of Communist Party class revolution and agrarian reform, as well as everyday existence in a city like Beijing.

In my field notes from the same year, I posed a question about the relationship between contemporary art and Beijing: Am I trying to write an ethnography about a city in which art plays a part or an ethnography about art in which the city plays a part? This book explores the questions that unfolded from that one. How do aesthetics do more than simply reflect political, social, and economic change? How does cultural production, as

once theorized by Chinese Communist intellectuals, actively shape collective consciousness and social identity, perceptions of time and space, and visions of the world? What is the legacy of past forms of visual praxis on contemporary production? How are envisioned timespaces always-already uneven and gendered? The construction site in *Subversion-Earth* provides a metaphor for a central tension in my account of Chinese contemporary art during the first years of the new millennium: between the power of art to represent, at large or from above, a cultural entity like Beijing or China or even the world and the potentially subversive activity of the artist, at large in its streets and alleys, monuments and ruins, lived histories and intimate interiors.

As I traversed streets plastered with slogans like "New Century, New Beijing," I practiced, in my minor and temporary way, something most residents did. I mapped the city and my relationship to it, to what had been, to what was marked for demolition, to what was being torn down, and to what was being built. People talked all the time about the *chaiqian* (demolition and relocation) politics of urban renewal ubiquitous in Chinese cities, about the logic or the injustice of it, about how favorite haunts had disappeared overnight or how they could no longer find their way around once familiar neighborhoods. Some artists seized the moment as an opportunity to move out of the studio—with still and video cameras, spray paint, mirrors, bricks, fabric, ice, and their own bodies—to create site-specific works about this epochal process.

I tracked their role in China's endeavor to "link tracks with the world" (*yu shijie jiegui*). In 2001 alone, China entered the WTO, Beijing won its bid to host the 2008 Olympics, and the men's national soccer team qualified for the first time to compete in the 2002 World Cup. This sequence of events briefly gave rise to the phrase *ru shi*, meaning "to enter the world," or in a pun playing on the Chinese homophones of world and city, "to enter the city." This conflation of Beijing, China, and the world shimmered with the anticipation of having finally arrived. It played off of, even as it diminished, the Maoist commitment to "enter the life" (*shenru shenghuo*) of the exploited classes and rural peasantry in order to represent them. Urbanism, the privileging of city over country as site of growth, excitement, and futurity, became the mandate of the day. I followed artists and their interlocutors from art classrooms to cramped apartment studios to an expanding number of local exhibition spaces, through a city that many likened to a massive construction zone. Male rural migrants labored night and day on the skeletons of high-rise buildings. Migrant women worked in restaurants,

hair salons, entertainment spaces, and private homes. Urban workers laid off from "iron-rice-bowl" jobs in state-owned enterprises struggled to survive in a new market economy. Students and strivers from the provinces, expats from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and beyond entered this border zone of city and country, socialism and capitalism, nation and world, memory and dream. Dust hung in the air. Cranes swung through the sky. The chemical smell of urban renewal wafted through the streets.

China's transition from a socialist political economy toward integration with transnational capitalism affected visual art production in numerous ways. The state relaxed orthodox political authority over art, although this process was intermittent and not without reversal. As state stipends dwindled, artists sought new channels of support and commission. Many threw themselves into experimenting with aesthetic form and found themselves navigating emergent market forces. Chinese contemporary art began to circulate in international and developing domestic markets, becoming subject to multiple modes of interpretation and evaluation. Art academies and exhibition spaces underwent reorganization and semiprivatization. The artists I came to know negotiated this nexus of state cultural control, market economics, and gender politics in the attempt to earn a living and make and exhibit their work.

By and large, they belonged to an in-between generation, born between the late 1950s and early 1970s, whose experiences spanned the transition from socialism to "reform and opening." They had some personal memory of the Cultural Revolution; some had even been sent-down youth who spent years in the countryside. Many had trained in China's top national art academies, in Beijing, Hangzhou, or Chongqing, where they mastered the techniques of socialist realism, even if they later discarded these for experiments in performance, installation, or video art. Some waxed nostalgic over the "culture fever" (*wenhua re*) years of the 1980s, when they gained access to texts, theories, and forms of art suppressed under Mao and immersed themselves in intense debates that went on late into the night.[11] They had lived through the cultural and political crackdown after the 1989 protests in Tiananmen Square. They had witnessed the impact of accelerating market reforms after Deng Xiaoping's 1992 Tour of the South and pronouncement that China link tracks with the world through trade. As the millennial premise of Beijing as global city came to increasingly depend on the development of a cultural economy rather than an industrial one, they got caught up, energized and conflicted by this new relationship between capital and culture. Their paths through the city traced a net-

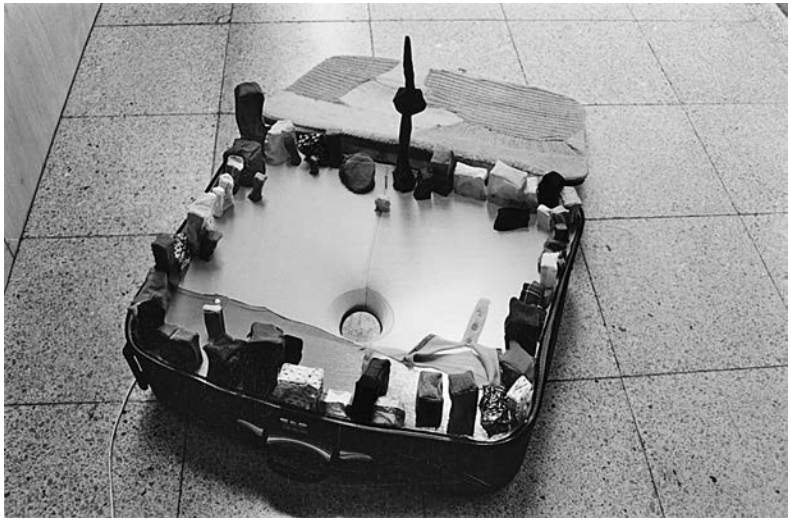
work that extended in new ways to other parts of China and the world, the past and the present. Their experiences, stories, artworks, and actions mapped discrepant transnational connections across space and time. How these maps were drawn depended on social positionality, with coordinates shaped by gender, class, and rural-urban identity.

Gender in the Global City

If Wang Nengtao's *Subversion* captures the massive turning over of the urban landscape, Yin Xiuzhen's 2001 *Portable Cities–Beijing* (figure Intro.01) packs it into a suitcase. Displayed on the floor, the suitcase lies open to reveal frame-supported fabric, cut and engineered to resemble architectural elements of the cityscape. The small, rumpled, and soft structures interject the alienating modern megacity with the domestic intimacy of human wear and dwelling.[12] Made from clothing once worn by the artist and her family members, the piece represents Beijing as a ring of buildings circling the open green space of a stretched shirt. Pulled inward, the sleeve leads the viewer's eye down to a macro lens that displays in miniature a map of the city circa 1949 affixed to the bottom of the suitcase. A speaker inside plays Beijing opera sung by elderly amateurs recorded in Shichahai Park, a popular public space north of the Forbidden City flooded by 2001 with trendy restaurants, bars, and bicycle rickshaw tours of old *hutong* alleyways.

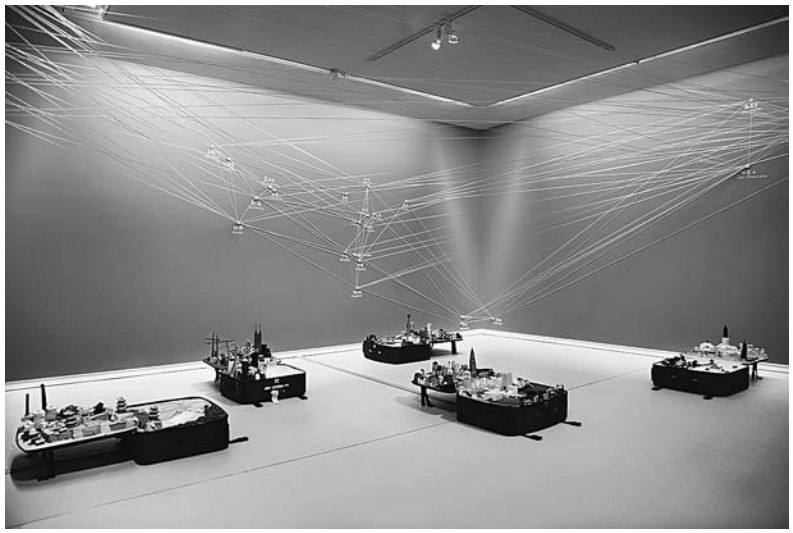
The only recognizable building is the Central Radio and TV Tower, which marks the suitcase's outer rim as the Third Ring Road. All of central Beijing has disappeared in a taut expanse of green fabric pulled into a slightly off-center vortex with a diminishing view of the historical capital. This timehole, with its soundtrack of disembodied Beijing opera singers, eerily empties the center, a site of massive razing and rebuilding, including the soon-to-be-demolished hutong where Yin and her artist husband Song Dong lived during the creation of this piece. Within a few years, its defining monument would be outdated, surpassed in size, ambition, and international reputation by the new China Central Television Headquarters designed by Rem Koolhaas as anchor to Beijing's new Central Business District. *Portable Beijing* serves as a premonition of the accelerating changes to come, while also giving shelter to the tactility of memory and personal history.

Portable Beijing was the first in what became a series titled *Portable Cities*. As Yin Xiuzhen began receiving commissions to create new works in locations around the world, she frequently found herself in transit. The



INTRO.01 Yin Xiuzhen, *Portable Cities–Beijing*, 2001. Installation. Courtesy of the artist.

idea for *Portable Cities* came to her while waiting at an airport baggage claim, when she suddenly saw each suitcase as the home a traveler tries to carry with her.[13] She fabricated the pieces in the series from old clothing gathered at their respective sites of creation: Shanghai, Singapore, Sydney, New York, Berlin, Paris . . . . As these portable cities accumulated, Yin began to exhibit them as an ensemble mapping her travels (figure Intro.02). On an oceanic blue wall behind the open suitcases, yellow buttons serve as drop pins for each city, connected by strands of yellow yarn. While Beijing now appears as one among many networked global destinations, the familial specificity of the clothing in this first in series activates a different emotional energy, linking materiality and memory. Each piece of fabric evoked personal details of wear, care, and the passage of time. Yin recalled, for example, that she'd created a purple building from a shirt she once thought was very fashionable when her sister gave it to her.[14] She has also discussed how the act of sewing so central to her artistic practice produced a connection with her mother, who once worked in a clothing factory and sometimes took up needle and thread to help Yin with her artwork.[15] *Portable Beijing* as the point of origin for *Portable Cities* stitches together intergenerational histories of home and state: of women's virtue performed through needlework as emblem of domesticity, of female labor mobilized into socialist industrial production, and of gendered global



INTRO.02 Yin Xiuzhen, *Portable Cities*, 2002–present. Installation view, Yin Xiuzhen solo exhibition, Groninger Museum, Netherlands, 2012. Courtesy of the artist.

commodity chains. It vacillates between the touch and feel of home and everywhere-nowhere market reproducibility.

If Wang Nengtao's *Subversion* and Yin Xiuzhen's *Portable Beijing* ruminate on China's capital as construction site and global city in the making, in which art and urbanism are articulated together, Chen Lingyang's *25:00* continues their study of scale, with a cityscape haunted by gender politics (plate 2). In this photographic dreamspace, one in a two-piece series, a nude giantess looms within Beijing's built environment. The angle of perspective in the long scroll-like photograph, as in Wang's, comes from above, although here the only visible human figure miniaturizes the buildings. It is the artist's own body at the center of the image, lying face down on top of an apartment block, her exposed spine aligned with its central axis. Her head dangles over the edge, hair hanging down like that of an ink brush. The female figure appears huge yet vulnerable, as she comes into sensuous contact with a city where new commercial buildings rise above socialist work-unit housing. Exhibited as a transparency in an illuminated lightbox, the image glows with a dark, magic-hour intensity. Of this series, Chen comments: "Very often, the real world and the male world get mixed up in my mind. They both come from outside me; they both exist very forcefully, with initiative, power, and aggression. Facing these two worlds, I often feel that I am weak and helpless, and don't know what to do. But

just being alive means that I cannot avoid them, not even for one day. I wish that every day there could be a certain time like 25:00, when I could become as large as I like, and do whatever I want."[16] This larger-than-life figuration exists in temporal ephemerality.

25:00 raises questions about the politics of representation in Chinese contemporary art: about how gender matters in terms of art world access and recognition; how art shapes understandings of femininity and masculinity; and how gender and sexuality figure centrally in conceptions of China's modernity and worldliness. While several important historical accounts document Chinese contemporary art from the 1980s on, questions of gender and feminism in them remain an afterthought, relegated to single chapters or subsections of these thick volumes.[17] Informed by a rich body of scholarship that has demonstrated the significance of precisely these questions in China's development as a modern nation-state, its revolutionary politics and market reform, *Experimental Beijing* confronts this sidelining of gender in the story of art.[18] It asks what a focus on gender, as central rather than epiphenomenal, reveals about an emerging art world. In the next section, an overview of influential exhibits from the two decades preceding the new millennium provides historical context. The politics of representation that played out in these exhibits, inside and outside of China, resulted in a new artistic political grammar.[19] Avant-garde became coded as *liumang* (hooligan) and masculine.[20] Female artists, largely excluded from this realm of activity, found their work contained within a new domesticating and marginalizing category of *nüxing yishu* (feminine or women's art). My feminist intent throughout this book is to deconstruct this restrictive, binaristic liumang/nüxing political grammar in order to make a new form of storytelling possible.

Exhibition Politics

On February 5, 1989, *China/Avant-Garde* opened in Beijing at the National Art Museum of China. Six long black banners draped down the entrance stairs announced the exhibition title and displayed the red and white insignia of a no U-turn sign. This survey show, including 297 pieces by 186 artists, represented a culmination of the many art activities and groups that had emerged over the previous decade.[21] In 1979, several unofficial art exhibits, building on the energy of the Beijing Spring Democracy Movement, attracted broad attention. The *Stars Art Exhibition* remains the best

known of these efforts. Staged on the street outside of the National Art Museum, it featured work by young artists with little to no formal training. Art colleges had been shut throughout the Cultural Revolution and only began to readmit students in 1978. Some of the work by the Stars group explicitly attacked Maoist ideology, and police shut the exhibit down after two days. Stars members responded by holding a public demonstration on October 1, the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. By the mid-1980s, intellectual debates about reestablishing humanism in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution and art trends such as the normalization of nudity in painting signaled an ongoing liberalization of culture. Numerous unofficial art groups and interlocutors of Western modernist styles sprouted up around the country. This efflorescence of artistic experiments and theories eventually became known at the '85 Art New Wave.[22]

By the time of the *China/Avant-Garde* exhibition, interest in this burgeoning art scene had developed in China. As audience members, who had turned out on the eve of Chinese New Year, wandered through the galleries, two shots rang out. Artist Xiao Lu had drawn a handgun and fired into her piece *Dialogue*, shattering a mirror at the center of the installation. Police arrested her and Tang Song, another artist at the scene whom they assumed was involved, and closed the exhibit. It reopened several days later, only to be suspended one more time due to pieces in violation of the organizers' contract with the museum not to exhibit performance art, as well as a false bomb threat. Nonetheless, it came to be known as an important retrospective of the artistic energies unleashed during the 1980s, and from the perspective of many I met during my fieldwork, the last interesting thing to happen at the National Art Museum of China. Just three months after the exhibit, the growing student protests in Tiananmen Square captured international media attention. Following the events of June 4, 1989, authorities shut down several prominent art magazines, and artists who had participated in *China/Avant-Garde* experienced difficulty showing in official venues. Some, like Xiao Lu and Tang Song, left the country.

In the climate of tension and uncertainty that ensued, officials viewed Chinese art labeled "avant-garde" as a suspect manifestation of liberal bourgeois tendencies. With equal conviction, the international art market embraced it as an emblem of resistance to authoritarian oppression.[23] During the 1990s, this art toured an ever-widening international circuit. *China's New Art, Post-1989*, an exhibit featuring many of the *China/Avant-Garde* artists, opened at the Hong Kong Arts Centre and City Hall

in 1993. Co-organized by Beijing critic and curator Li Xianting and Hong Kong art collector Chang Tsong-zung, it shaped international knowledge of Chinese contemporary art and the careers of a select group of almost exclusively male artists. After Hong Kong, a scaled-down version traveled to London, Sydney, and Melbourne, and from 1995 to 1998 to the North American cities of Vancouver; Eugene, Oregon; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Salina, Kansas; Chicago; and San Jose, California. Other exhibitions in Europe—*China Avant-Garde: Counter-Currents in Art and Culture* (1993) in Berlin, *Reckoning with the Past* (1996) in Edinburgh, and *China*! (1996) in Bonn—featured many of the same artists.[24]

I first grew interested in Chinese contemporary art while working in Beijing as an English teacher from 1992 to 1994. Given official constraints on exhibition during this period, most of what I learned came from books, photos, and stories shared by students and friends. My earliest encounter with artworks occurred in San Francisco in 1999, when *Inside Out: New Chinese Art* brought the first comprehensive survey of this work to major U.S. museums.[25] Gao Minglu, cocurator of *China/Avant-Garde* in Beijing who had since become a Harvard PhD candidate in art history, provided the main curatorial vision for the exhibit. It included some artists from Hong Kong and Taiwan but largely represented the canon and connections forged by Gao in the formative moment of 1989. After opening at the Asia Society Galleries and P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in New York, *Inside Out* traveled to San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art and Asian Art Museum. On both coasts, the collaboration between institutions devoted to Asian art and modern and contemporary art represented an effort to disrupt conventional Western ideas about Chinese art as relegated to antiquities. Gary Garrels, SFMoMA chief curator of painting and sculpture, noted in an exhibit symposium that *Inside Out* was the museum's first showing of Chinese art, and aside from a few forays into postwar Japanese art, its first comprehensive exhibit of artwork from Asia. This inclusion of Chinese art within Western museums of modern art departed from traditional orientalist museology, yet the framing of *Inside Out* as an exhibit of "underground" or "unofficial" art resulted in a politicized understanding of it as dissent against an authoritarian, Communist state.[26] An intended decolonizing move led to a recolonizing move, with the art still framed by an East-West politics.

The 1990s association of the Chinese avant-garde with a liumang attitude of rebellion and spiritual malaise, expressed through styles indentified as Cynical Realism and Political Pop, was established not only through

an oppositional relationship with the Chinese state, but through transnational circulation. Exhibits in pre-handover Hong Kong, Europe, and the United States and the growing interest of foreign collectors and auction houses contributed to the discursive production of a repressed, heroic body of art that could only be exhibited and appreciated outside of China. The lack of female artists in these exhibits fed assumptions about Chinese women as even more repressed, understood to be delayed by culture and tradition. For example, at the SFMoMA *Inside Out* symposium, critic and curator Britta Erickson, who moderated a panel on identity, pointed out that of the seventy artists in the exhibit, only six were women. Of these, she continued, the majority hailed from Hong Kong and Taiwan and had been positively influenced by Western feminism in studies abroad.

In my research, I frequently heard echoes of this Western narrative of progress, with Linda Nochlin's famous question of "why have there been no great women artists?" reformulated as "does China have any great women artists?"[27] Western and Chinese art world participants alike engaged in this line of questioning, and by the mid-1990s several responses arose. In China the term nüxing yishu—usually translated as "women's art" or "feminine art" but sometimes also shorthand for *nüxingzhuyi yishu* or "feminist art"—began to appear around 1995, the year Beijing hosted the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. While Chinese leaders intended for the conference to showcase Chinese women's advanced social position to the world, Western media coverage of the conference framed the Chinese state as hostile to capitalist democracy and its definition of human rights and insinuated that China had not yet fully freed their women to enjoy such rights.[28] This grammar of international feminism presumes the universal similarity of women who should seek justice through a Western model, effectively ignoring the Chinese feminist record: a women's liberation movement well over a century long. Nüxing yishu emerged as a response, produced every bit as much through transnational encounter as its liumang analogue. In 1995, it served as the organizational logic for two small-scale exhibits: *Natural Feminine Art* organized by Lin Zi in Kunming; and *Women's Approach to Chinese Contemporary Art* curated by Liao Wen in Beijing.[29] In 1998, *Century Woman* at Beijing's National Art Museum showcased work by seventy Chinese women under the rubric of "women's art." This flurry of activity brought recognition to female artists marginalized by post-1989 international art market trends, but the institutionalization of nüxing yishu also led to domesticating containment. Jia Fangzhou, curator of *Century Woman*, delineated in his preface to the exhibit catalogue

the "essential characteristics of women's art," including among them childlike fantasy; apathy toward politics, history, and philosophy; and general disinterest in the male world.[30]

Exhibits organized by Western curators such as *Half the Sky* in Bonn, Germany, also contributed to these efforts of redress. This project originated in a protest action that took place on International Women's Day in 1996, when supporters of the city's Frauenmuseum barricaded the *China*! exhibit at Bonn's Museum of Modern Art with a sign reading: "Today one cannot visit this museum! We are protesting against the lockout of Chinese women artists. It is impudent or at least foolish to claim that there is not a single woman artist among the Chinese population of 1.2 thousand million."[31] The museum's director responded by asserting there really were no women artists in China, and that the only interesting Chinese women working in the arts lived in exile overseas.[32] *Half the Sky* opened two years later, just a few months after *Century Woman* in Beijing, as the Frauenmuseum's rebuttal to this spurious claim. While the consequence of locating the empowerment of Chinese women in a gallery outside of China was somewhat ameliorated by the German curators' discovery of the *Century Woman* project, an ironic tension remains in their title based on Mao Zedong's slogan "Women hold up half the sky." It clashes with Chinese feminist attempts, as part of the overall reform-era debates about humanism, to excavate an individual female agency from the massified subject of Maoist state culture. Momentarily enabling as a response to marginalization, nüxing yishu eventually became a category that many artists who first exhibited under its auspices disavowed, because of how it limited their work and its impact on social life within the nation and beyond.

As I began fieldwork in Beijing in 2000, some of the male artists who had enjoyed success overseas expressed anxiety over how foreign consumption foreclosed interpretation of their work and threatened to turn it into a "made in China" export, collected and displayed in the West.[33] At the same time, I came to recognize that female artists had often performed support labor for this international circulation (as translators, teachers, wives, and mothers) or found their work restricted within the category of nüxing yishu. They likewise contended with the irony of their underrepresentation against a representational backdrop replete with female figures: martyrs for and models of revolutionary nationalism and reform-era embodiments of desire and excess. As official attitudes toward contemporary art shifted in the early 2000s, many male artists got caught up in the mo-

ment of national recognition and entrepreneurial cosmopolitanism. Some who achieved market success even moved toward a capitalist separation of mental and manual labor and outsourced production of their concepts.[34] Most women, however, still struggled for visibility, a situation that led some to develop a critical art practice marked by historiographical consciousness, in which conventional histories of art—global, national, and feminist—are queried and overturned from peripheral positions, of the socialist past, the rural, and the Chinese woman artist. These women excavated discarded female figures from the public symbology of their art training and from personal memory in order to deconstruct, remake, and revivify them. Their works do not fit neatly into canonical formations that emphasize progress of one order or another.

The Expanded Field

Chinese artists who gained international recognition often found their work framed by a narrative of universalism, in which naturalized assumptions about what art is, and how it is authenticated as such, operate. The interpretation of Chinese artists in terms like "the avant-garde" grants them member status in the global art world, but under a label that bears the imprimatur of earlier Euro-American movements and thus casts them as "catching up." This universalizing story, however, counter to the best intentions of many who invoke it, fails to recognize the cultural encounters and negotiations that shape artists' lives and the work they produce. Ethnography, as a form of research based in participant observation, provides everyday witness to these encounters as a way of theorizing about how they reflect and influence sociocultural phenomena on a larger scale. Feminist anthropologists have drawn attention to the relational epistemology of ethnography, as a form of knowledge produced through subjective relationships and shaped by difference and power.[35] As ethnographer, I immersed myself in the zone of encounter of Chinese contemporary art, in which aesthetic and cultural formations were forged through relationships across difference.[36] I became intimately aware of my positioning within this zone, every time I served as an interpreter for a foreign curator and considered my potential influence on an artist's career, every time I sat in a smoke-filled banquet room with a group of male artists and it was assumed that I was someone's foreign girlfriend, every time I sought out female artists to understand how they navigated this enervating terrain.

The title of this chapter and section allude to Rosalind Krauss's "Sculpture in the Expanded Field." In this 1979 essay, she analyzes the historicism of postwar American art criticism, which assimilated modernist sculptural production into a universal formal category by constructing "a paternity" for it.[37] She argues that sculpture understood as a universal category alienates it from its historical boundedness and premodern logic of monumentality, as "it sits in a particular place and speaks in a symbolic tongue about the meaning or use of that place."[38] Modernist sculpture and its criticism turned the monument into abstraction, "functionally placeless and largely self-referential."[39] This autonomous mode of production would eventually collapse, as postmodern practice rejected modernism's repressive paternity and insisted on putting art back into place. Sculpture, put into relational antinomy or proximity with landscape and architecture, became but one possible form in the expanded field. Krauss's revisionist approach to the history of form suggests how a field like "Chinese contemporary art" needs expanding beyond historicist and hegemonic constructions: as either belated arrival on a global scene dominated by Western genealogies, or national patrimony of a China on the rise. The historical conditions through which Chinese contemporary art emerged necessitate an examination of aesthetics in relation to specific sites and histories, but without the presumption of national or cultural boundedness. This approach maps instead relational webs of meaning across space and time, deconstructing autonomous ideas of art as well as Eurocentric and masculinist discourses of belatedness.

I label this field "Chinese contemporary art" rather than "contemporary Chinese art" because the works produced in the art worlds I describe most often get classified in China as *dangdai yishu*, literally meaning "contemporary art" but generally referring to works produced in particular media—oil painting, photography, video, installation, and performance art—seen as horizontally linked to contemporary art practice in the West.[40]

When I began my fieldwork, many Chinese friends and acquaintances outside this domain reproached me for my interest in it, telling me that it didn't really represent China. Art world participants I talked to were equally vexed, about the absence of a Chinese audience able to appreciate and understand their work. They earnestly debated and proposed ways to build a viewing public. By 2002, when I left Beijing after two years of fieldwork, the number of popular Chinese magazines devoted to dangdai yishu and of people beginning to frequent new contemporary art spaces gave an indication of their success.[41] This growing audience was part of

China's burgeoning urban middle class, for whom learning to appreciate dangdai yishu signified cosmopolitan distinction. This shifting ground of in/authenticity makes contemporary art a compelling way to examine Chinese cultural politics. Artists as arbiters of world culture became public tastemakers and therefore inadvertent state actors. Some made the most of the moment, but many remained cagey and critical. They struggled over what their representational labor amounted to, and to whom it should appeal. Using Anna Tsing's metaphor of friction as the grip of encounter that drives global connections, close attention to the friction artists experienced and the images they produced in the process reveals how they also dig vertically into layers of history: of personal experience, of their training in institutions shaped by anticolonial nationalism and socialism, and of specific visual technologies and references.[42] These excavations are mixed and erratic, compiling an inventory of traces.[43] The more they "enter the world," the more acute their efforts at inventory become. Yin Xiuzhen's *Portable Beijing*, for example, conjures a life of transit and airport baggage carousels but also official visualizations of the capital city and gendered histories of needlework and factory labor.

My analysis of this expanded field involves theoretical and methodological eclecticism at the intersection of anthropology, art history, and gender studies. In referring to the social realm of art production as an art world, I use a term coined by art critic Arthur Danto, who writes, "To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld."[44] Sociologist Howard Becker elaborates on the term, to denote the collective activity that produces artworks and gives them aesthetic and sometimes other forms of value.[45] He demystifies the romantic cult of individual creation by demonstrating the diverse and coordinated activities of multiple participants necessary for art to be made and recognized as such. I refer to "art worlds" in the plural to indicate the multiple collectivities engaged in such activities; sometimes they overlap, other times they constitute themselves through antagonistic evaluations about what does or doesn't count as art. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of a "field of cultural production" argues that the artistic field cannot be reduced to a circumscribed group of people. Rather, it is one among other hierarchically organized, structurally homologous fields—the economic field, the educational field, the political field, among others—that coexist in relational play within the field of power.[46] Alfred Gell advocates an anthropology of art in which art objects serve not only as mediators between people but as social agents in and of themselves.

This focus on the personhood of art objects represents a turn away from isolated studies of "ethnic art" and sociological investigations of art institutions.[47] To the analysis of cultural production within a larger field of power, I add global and gendered dimensions. Chinese contemporary art is not a self-contained art world, a necessarily bourgeois pursuit, or a nationally circumscribed field of cultural production, but one structured by discrepant global connections and gender and class relations. While my analysis takes into account the role of institutions in amplifying or diminishing art's agency, it also takes seriously the agency of art objects. Their expressive enchantments are precisely what send them circulating through the world, carving shifting channels of transmission and extending object and personhood across space and time.[48]

As an ethnographer, I understand my field to be more a habitus, "a cluster of embodied dispositions and practices," than a geographically bound site.[49] In Beijing I traced a network of locations that included art classrooms, artist villages, foreign-run commercial galleries, Chinese-run art centers in new real estate ventures, and vacated factories and warehouses turned into guerrilla gathering spaces or renovated Soho-style exhibit halls. This field as network also extended to a rural corner of Yunnan Province, art spaces in Shanghai and Hong Kong, and symposiums on Chinese contemporary art in San Francisco, London, and New York. I brought to this field a feminist disposition influenced by art historians who analyze the critical field of gender within cultural production. As they have demonstrated, constructions of gender difference produce artistic hierarchies that relegate women to lesser categories, limit their participation in dominant practices, and when they work through these limitations to become influential innovators, marginalize their contributions.[50]

Feminism in the Expanded Field

Feminist analysis of the field of cultural production—as a zone of encounter between different valuations of culture—involves more than just paying attention to women. I read contemporary art world activity through the historical Chinese feminist analytic of *nannü* (male/female), theorized by He-Yin Zhen in her 1907 essay "On the Question of Women's Liberation."[51] For He-Yin, nannü signifies not simply gender difference but the ongoing production of social abstractions and markings that create hierarchy, inequality, and injustice. The conceptual mechanism of *nannü youbie* (male/

female differentiation) actively produces distinction as a form of power and domination, and therefore can also assume an adjectival form, as in He-Yin's term *nannü jie* (nannü class).[52] Seen through this lens, the work of art becomes implicated in the production of such abstractions, whether of East and West, man and woman, or rural and urban. It reiterates symbolic orders, sometimes with a radical difference, always within a relationship of past to present. The iconic female revolutionary, red, bright, and shining in her militant rebellion and quest for modernity, haunts the redomesticated, depoliticized category of nüxing yishu; just as the iconic peasant hero, liberated by Mao's call for the countryside to surround and capture the cities, haunts Beijing as cultural capital where rural migrants provide the rationalized, flexibilized labor to build its new monuments of global achievement. While Beijing is ostensibly the national center, I analyze it as an always-already uneven and gendered timespace that depends on the countryside, ideologically and economically. I trace how artists traverse this timespace of rural-urban relationality: through their references to the socialist tradition of "representing the people"; creation of artist villages at city's edge; down-to-the-countryside pedagogical field trips; restaging of the Long March as art event; and employment and representation of rural migrants in experimental art practice.

Throughout *Experimental Beijing*, a feminist lens highlights the contradictions of an emerging art world, the dialectical tension between monumental and ephemeral visions of life during the heady new millennium conflation of Beijing, China, and the world. These contradictions include artists who desire and resist institutional recognition by both foreign art professionals and Chinese state entities; artists who utilize experimental art forms to document social upheaval and inequality while also being enlisted to repress reform-era injustices by creating art-enhanced spaces for pleasure and status; the simultaneous valorization of the artist as heroic, suffering cultural critic and as cosmopolitan entrepreneur; and the underrepresentation of women as artists in the face of female overrepresentation in Chinese modern and contemporary figurative expression. While the latter is most obviously related to gender, attention to how women have been symbolically positioned *and* professionally marginalized throws these contradictions into sharp relief. Dominant narratives have smoothed over these contradictions. A focus on gender thus produces a nonnormative history of Chinese contemporary art and cultivates a differential consciousness about the shifting role of art—as ideological, institutional, and imaginative—within various configurations of power.

As part of my habitus in the field, I conducted interviews with artists, art students and teachers, curators, and gallerists. I observed and drew and painted alongside students in art classrooms ranging from university-level academies to the state-run Children's Center. I traveled from the massive new studios built by artists who had "made it" to the dusty, cramped apartments of those struggling to get by, from white-cube galleries in central Beijing or on the Bund in Shanghai to the urban enclaves of rural migrants working as artists' assistants. As these interlocutors pulled me further into their worlds and visions of the world, I ended up interpreting for curators from the United States as they toured artists' studios, translating and writing catalogue texts, and filming a video documentary of a feminist art happening. I returned during the summers of 2004 and 2006 as the curator of a feminist art exhibit that opened in Shanghai before traveling to Beijing and eventually Hong Kong; and again during the summer of 2007 for follow-up research.[53] These activities constituted my participation observation and served as collaborative interventions into art world status quos.

This ethnography gradually moves toward a story of feminist encounter between artist and ethnographer. The first two parts of the book provide context. Part I: Art Worldings presents millennial Beijing poised to "enter the world" as a site of culture industry formation, in which art overcomes and activates a historical material dialectic with past visions of the world. It follows how various social actors rework meanings of *xianfeng*/avant-garde in assertions of Beijing as China's cultural capital, and how in the process they build new cultural institutions. Part II: Zones of Encounter presents two encounters between international curators and artists and Chinese counterparts: one in which the politics of cultural translation led to the exclusion of female artists from potential international circulation and another that became a protracted struggle over contending versions of feminism: international, national, and generational. This middle section of the book nests the story of feminist art encounters within the story of the global-local and East-West encounters that shape Chinese contemporary art. Parts I and II generate the analytic movement toward what I consider the book's heart and soul. The three chapters of part III: Feminist Sight Lines each focus on an individual artist with whom I had an extended relationship.

In the course of my fieldwork, I came to know female artists like Yin Xiuzhen who have achieved international recognition and circulation, but in Feminist Sight Lines I highlight the lives and works of three artists—Li Tianpian, He Chengyao, and Lei Yan—whose careers have followed less

visible trajectories. I interpret their work as feminist because of a critical historiographical consciousness cultivated by being on the periphery. My encounters with these artists, their stories, and their artworks shifted my understanding of feminist art. They make visible transnational and transhistorical connections. These connections disrupt the frameworks that prevail in art criticism and museum curation: of Chinese contemporary art as brand new and nation-bound and of global feminist art as born in the West before spreading to the rest. They work to unhinge woman from the literal and figurative work she has performed for the nation in modern and contemporary art. Feminist art thus emerges as an epistemological field of practice rather than an object, event, or project, in which thinking relationally, in terms of social hierarchies, aesthetic form, and ideology, is foundational.[54] Feminist art, rather than originating in a particular time or place, has the potential to *world* in another way, to make visible other worlds-in-becoming. It creates new sight lines of knowledge, recognition, affiliation, and alliance in which art takes on an ethical dimension, of reordering the pain and pleasure of being in the world, of memorializing, of taking care.

Using Chela Sandoval's concept of differential oppositional consciousness, I argue that these artists' peripheral positions shaped the development of a critical art practice. They not only deconstruct the ideological power of past forms of image making but also meta-ideologize, or create "new, 'higher' levels of signification built onto the older, dominant forms of ideology in a radical process."[55] They take, for instance, Maoist representations of the woman soldier, so prevalent in literature, art, and film, and recast her in ways that question the instrumental use of her image by the state and redirect her critical potential toward different aims. Meta-ideologizing is an emancipatory technology of oppositional power that "moves in, through, and then outside of dominant ideology."[56] As art practice, it reveals the long-durée global art world encounters that have shaped different worldings, or visions of the world, and the dependence of these worldings on particular understandings of gender.

Put another way, these women are "caught up" in a different way from male peers who moved from underground, "avant-garde" activity to positions of national and international influence. They are caught by a set of interlocking double binds, generated through cultural encounter over time, regarding female talent and representation. For example, traditional women of talent (*cainü*), cast as poetic and prone to flights of fancy, were seen as lacking the rationality to become disciplined national subjects, the

"good wife and wise mother" or "mother of citizens" articulated by early twentieth-century reformers, whereas traditional virtuous women were seen as lacking the cultural literacy and education to likewise serve the new nation.[57] By the end of the twentieth century, the catch had become: women who "hold up half the sky" lack individual consciousness and innovation as artists, whereas women who identify with nüxing yishu, constrained by subjective interiority, lack public political consciousness. The double bind, conceived as a communication dilemma that results from two conflicting messages, sets a trap that ends in failure no matter what message one follows.[58] The resulting confusion sustained through habitual experience with this splintering form of negative injunction serves as a form of control without overt coercion.[59] Art can be a way of meditating on and moving beyond the dilemma, a method for confronting this form of control. The artists I focus on in part III create works that activate image worlds; their excavation and reworking of past images and ways of image making are multidirectional and meta-ideological. They cite across space and time, not as attribution or homage, but to shift our understanding of the world-making power of images past and future. The depth of their conceptual practice, while not usually recognized for this achievement, opens up interpretation of work by their male counterparts in terms other than those of a universalizing story of artistic expression.

Image Worlds and Worldings

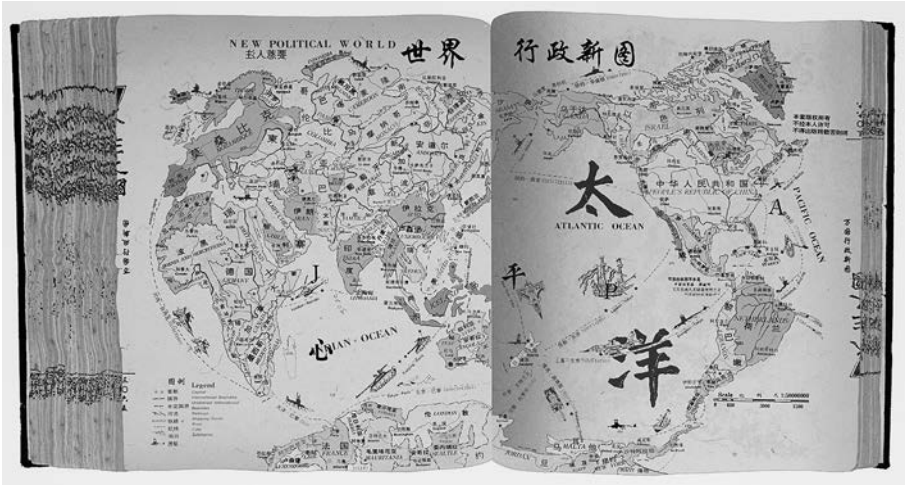
The concept of the "image world," central to my critical praxis, emerged from my encounters with these artists and their work. Image worlds highlight the relationships among images, in which the form and meaning of one is shaped by others, within a complex network invoked in the process of looking and making. Any single historicist line of influence and attribution thus ruptures into a web of meaning in which past works are not hermetically sealed but open to resignification from multiple directions. Image worlds also show how particular understandings of the world are made visible by the image and how images are works that draw on and remake a world of other images.[60] Image worlds take, in the words of Rasheed Araeen, "art as method." It is art, as he writes, "by which modernity as an advancing force is defined by its exclusive European subjectivity; only art can confront neo-imperialism and offer a model of decolonialism."[61] To think in terms of image worlds is to visualize the multidirectional tensions

between colonial and decolonial forces (East-West and male-female) that shape the work of art enmeshed in a global network of power relations.

The work of art, in "setting up a world," emerges in my fieldwork zone of encounter from tensions between different stagings of the world, or "worldings."[62] Worldings have the aura of totality, yet the continual supplanting of one by another or the coexistence of radically different visions shatters any such sureness. A geneology of worlding as theoretical concept, followed by a tracing of several worldings that continually resurface in the palimpsest of Chinese contemporary art, sets the stage for my ethnographic argument that begins with part I: Art Worldings. These selected worldings gesture toward the expansive archive of images, and the webs of meaning in which they are implicated, that artists pull from as they develop their repertoire and potential to differentially remake the world.[63] The ways these worldings overlap with or haunt one another are foundational to the contradictions arising in the field of Chinese contemporary art.

Hong Hao's *Selected Scriptures*, a series of silk-screen prints that resemble classical maps of exploration and discovery, presents interleaved, conflicting worldings. Each print's map appears to be contained within a traditionally bound book, opened to a particular page. This fictitious atlas binds together, however, not the world's nations, but differently imagined organizations of world space. Its maps scramble the world in any number of ways: by redrawing borders, shuffling place names, or altering the shape of geographic landmasses. In some, legends are labeled "Corrections." Dotted-line routes of ancient seafaring vessels and modern fighter jets connote crisscrossing trade and military connections. For *New World Order I*, Hong identified nations with the names of large corporations. *New Topography* assigns vast tracts of land to First World countries and crowds the Third World within severely delimited boundaries. In *New Political World* (figure Intro.03), First and Third Worlds are reversed. The shape of the United States is shaded yellow and labeled the People's Republic of China. A pink landmass sprouting the head, legs, and tail of a fox, labeled Mozambique, replaces Europe. The reiteration of "new" suggests a continual displacement of one world by another, although they all appear within the covers of a single book.

Gayatri Spivak invokes the term *worlding* in her critique of imperialism and the role of literature as a crucial form of cultural representation in underwriting the imperialist project. She characterizes her notion of the "worlding of a world" as a vulgarization of Martin Heidegger's philosophical idea of a world in relation to the earth, which shelters in its uninscribed



INTRO.03 Hong Hao, *Selected Scriptures–New Political World*, 1995. Silkscreen on paper, 55 cm × 76 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

spontaneity.[64] The world, as I understand Heidegger's formulation, is the human abstraction of what happens on earth, an ideological construct that makes material social relations seem natural, of the earth. Through her postcolonial reading of Heidegger, Spivak describes a worlding as the implicit, naturalized script that suffuses the literature of European colonizing cultures in the creation of something that has come to be called "the Third World," a narrative that organizes the world according to chronological, developmental stages. In this narrative, the colonized are robbed of the power to world, to represent their relationship to the earth. Spivak continues, "To consider the Third World as distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact literary heritages waiting to be recovered, interpreted, and curricularized in English translation fosters the emergence of 'the Third World' as a signifier that allows us to forget that 'worlding,' even as it expands the empire of the literary discipline."[65] The colonized are hence consigned to the earth that shelters the colonizer worlding. The work of deconstruction becomes necessary to unforget or reveal this powerful process of concealment, in which the world of the historical people of the Third World, and especially the native woman, has been repressed.

This worlding persists in some of the ways Chinese art has been managed in Western art spaces, but is also disrupted by other worldings—those advanced by China's successive modernity projects, each of which

required a rupture from the immediate past. Rebecca Karl's work, for example, on early Chinese nationalists demonstrates how they confronted Euro-American and Japanese imperialisms that had inscribed China as part of the Third World. They resisted through alternative ways of "staging the world"—tracing connections with political movements such as the Philippine revolution against the United States—in order to nurture an anticolonial consciousness.[66]

Gendered Worldings

Extending the idea developed by these thinkers, I conclude this chapter with three worldings—semicolonial, anticolonial, and late socialist. Each is made visible through images and structured by gender. Taken together they provide a framework for placing Chinese contemporary art in the expanded field. The first of these, a semicolonial worlding, is characterized by a term used to signify that China was not colonized outright by a single power, but subject to multiple Euro-American and Japanese imperialisms.[67] Chinese contemporary artists' uneasy relationship with the West emerges from a frequently invoked national memory of colonial humiliation.[68] As brass plaques at tourist sites in Beijing remind visitors, Western powers at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century looted China's imperial treasures.

In "Looting Beijing: 1860, 1900," James Hevia argues that the 1860 moment of Opium War plunder created new markets and knowledge of Chinese objets d'art, firmly situating things Chinese "within a global discourse on the curiosities of non-European peoples, and as commodities, the common sense of capitalist market exchange."[69] In the forty-year interim between 1860 and subsequent looting in 1900 when an eight-nation foreign alliance crushed the peasant uprising of the Boxer Rebellion, systematized practices of discernment grew in sophistication as auctioned objects passed into European and American markets.[70] Foreign art dealers opened shop in Beijing, and Western connoisseurs published tracts on Chinese art detailing classification schemes that guided the cataloging of items in institutions like London's Victoria and Albert Museum and New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.[71] These developments occurred simultaneously with the birth of modern exhibition spaces funded by the nation-state: the public museum and international exposition.

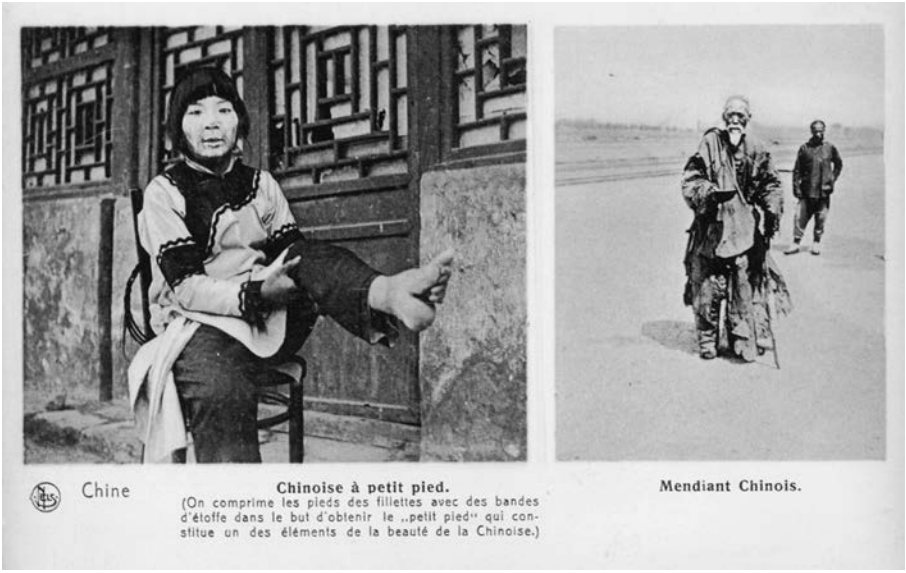
In an essay on British institutional framings of Chinese art, Craig Clunas admits to a moment of boyhood fetishism. His father took him, at the age of fourteen, to visit the Victoria and Albert Museum. Enthralled in the "Far Eastern Room" by a carved lacquer throne of the Chinese Emperor Qianlong (figure Intro.04), he waited for the guard to look away, then knelt before it. Decades later, after he has become curator of the same China collection, he unpacks the historical processes by which British public museums transferred Chinese objects from the domain of ethnography to that of "Chinese art," in a containment of Chinese culture as something with "a glorious past, a decayed and exhausted present and no future," a stage inviting theatricality.[72]

Within this display of China as an exhausted "lost state," the traditional Chinese woman came to stand as symbol of its decadent decay, and for Chinese reformers, of what they had to overcome to build a healthy, modern nation. As plundered Chinese objects entered Western collections, so did typifying postcards such as "Canton: Chinese Small Feet Beauty" (figure Intro.05) and "Chine: Chinoise à petit pied" (figure Intro.06).[73] These images were reprinted in a 2001 *Beijing Youth News* article. The first hand-colored studio photograph stages the woman with her silk-clad bound feet as one among several assembled Oriental objects. In the second photograph, captured in documentary black and white, the woman holds up her bare foot to the camera, exposing its bent shape to a voyeuristic, ethnographic gaze.[74] The newspaper article, "Deformity beneath a Glorious Costume," introduces a book of postcards produced during the late Qing Dynasty, explaining that these foreign representations of China will give contemporary youth a sense of their civilization's past "profound grief and bitterness."[75] Vanquished China became equated with exotic images exposing how Chinese culture had deformed its women.

In China's treaty ports, where multiple foreign powers exerted economic and political control, reform-minded intellectuals sought to explain and change their world situation. As Tani Barlow details, they turned to internationally circulating evolutionary discourse informed by the male/female binary of Victorian anthropological sex theory.[76] They interpreted Chinese tradition as having unnaturally oppressed woman, thereby making China weak, and forged the idea of a new eroticized woman, *nüxing*, based on a theory that prioritized sexual difference and desire over Confucian protocols concerning the position of a kinswoman in the patriline. They believed that liberating women for sexual selection, to choose their own reproductive partners, would eugenically strengthen the Chinese people.

INTRO.04 Throne, ca. 1775–80. Carved lacquer on a wood core. Taken from the Nan Yuan hunting park in 1901. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

INTRO.05 "Canton: Chinese Small Feet Beauty," ca. 1905. French postcard.



INTRO.06 "Chine: Chinoise à petit pied; Mendiant Chinois," ca. 1905. Belgian postcard.

Chinese progressive feminism and nüxing, a neologism made up of the ideographs for "female" and "sex," emerged from the drive to form a modern nation that could stand up to colonialism. (A forward-looking term at the time of its coining, nüxing has since undergone a complex history of repeated disavowal and reclamation.) This Chinese conjunction of nation building and female liberation produced women as signifiers of modernity. This semicolonial worlding led Chinese nationalists at the turn of the century and later Marxist critics in the 1920s and 1930s to reimagine the globe through an anticolonial worlding. In contradistinction to the racialized hierarchy of more or less civilized or advanced cultures promoted by imperialist visions of the world, they drew a distinction between those who used cultural difference in order to legitimate violent colonial oppression and those who through historical consciousness struggled for revolutionary self-actualization. Chinese socialist art thus images an international axis in which the people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America stand in solidarity with Mao at the center. As Julia Andrews points out, the painting *Mao Zedong with the People of Asia*, *Africa*, *and Latin America* (figure Intro.07) by Jin Shangyi and Wu Biduan contains yet another historical layer of political realignment.[77] Both painters were influenced by Soviet socialist realism; Jin was a graduate of an important oil painting class taught in China by Soviet painter Konstantin Maksimov, and Wu had studied in Leningrad. They most likely drew on A. A. Myl'nikov's *Awakening*, exhibited in China in 1957, which depicts the people of Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas marching together with raised fists. As the rift between China and the Soviet Union widened in the late 1950s, leading to an official split in 1960, Jin and Wu represented China at the global center of orthodox Communism.

This anticolonial worlding depended on a new conception of woman, as the nüxing of treaty-port reform discourse came to represent woman as bourgeois, desiring, and self-obsessed. Chinese Communist thinkers theorized a national revolutionary female subject; and *funü*—signifiying a massified subject to be mobilized for state political movements including class revolution—superseded the eroticized nüxing.[78] While class consciousness now eclipsed that of gender, the question of woman remained front and center in official ideology with the goal of proving a Marxist tenet fundamental to Maoist gender discourse, that "the degree of woman's emancipation is the natural measure of the general emancipation."[79] Socialist realism depicted women "holding up half the sky," in paintings such as Pan Jiajun's 1972 *I Am a "Seagull"*(figure Intro.08). Iron girls repaired high-

INTRO.07 Jin Shangyi and Wu Biduan, *Mao Zedong with the People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America*, 1960. Gouache. Published on the August 1960 cover of *China Reconstructs*. Courtesy of Wu Biduan.

voltage wires, welded girders, operated heavy machinery, shouldered guns, and harvested crops, dressed in the same clothes as men and performing the same tasks. They appeared again and again, "red, bright, and shining" (*hong guang liang*) with their gazes trained upward and outward, as official art pedagogy instructed. They became a fixture of visual culture, even as the number of prominent female artists during the height of socialism paled in comparison with their pictorial multiplicity and arguably even shrank from their ranks in early twentieth-century art circles when bourgeois women's art education flourished in cities like Shanghai.[80]

Throughout the Cold War, Western museums limited their display of Chinese art to the antiquities of its lost empire, with the visual arts under Mao held at bay as political propaganda.[81] In the United States, abstract expressionism became the epitome of Western modern art's will to freedom,

INTRO.08 Pan Jiajun, *I Am a "Seagull,"* 1972. Oil painting. Courtesy of the artist and the Guangdong Museum of Art.

its ideological promotion of abstraction, coded as more advanced in the language of formal innovation, over the political avant-garde.[82] While the artists I met during my fieldwork had trained in the visual styles and iconography of a revolutionary socialist worlding, their movement into a global art market forced them to confront late socialist "linked-up-with-the world" worldings. China's integration with transnational capitalism reconfigured its global imaginary to one shaped not through alliance with Third World comrades but by connections with Asia and *Oumei* (Europe and America). This shift in visualizing the world comes into focus in a work like Wang Qingsong's *Forum* (figure Intro.09). In this 2001 photograph, one in a series of staged, performative self-portraits, the artist appears as a modern-day Chinese bureaucrat sitting before a battery of microphones and photographers. The sign behind him announces, in Chinese and English, a fictitious "International Forum on Reestablishing Contemporary Civilization in China." The logos on the sign for the event's corporate sponsors range from Japan's JVC to the yellow arches of McDonald's; the micro-

phones are marked with insignia for medial channels such as BBC, CNN, CCTV, and Fox News, as well as national flags representing Canada, South Korea, and various European nations. The audience the artist addresses, with self-mocking seriousness, is clearly a capitalist West with links to the developmentalist economies of East Asia.

Female contemporaries Cao Fei and Huang Yin examine the commercialized and gendered aspects of this new worlding by adorning the female body with the cosmopolitan fashions of Burberry's trademark plaid and Louis Vuitton's signature bag, markers of luxury precisely because their manufacturers claim the genuine articles are not made in China, although knock-off copies and many other Western name brands are produced by Chinese female factory labor. In Cao's video *Rabid Dogs* (figure Intro.10), actors in Beijing opera-style makeup perform a parody of the city's new class of office workers as groveling "rabid dogs." Huang's oil painting *Myth* (figure Intro.11) reproduces the sleek surfaces of commercial photography, only the model's head turned coyly toward the viewer is that of a cartoonish smiling dog. They conflate the female body not only with the fashion markers of conspicuous consumption but with a commodity item signifying urbane wealth and leisure in China, the pet dog.

In these images, which work through China's bid to "link tracks with the world," there lurks a suspicion of how Chinese accumulation of symbolic and cultural capital will translate into social capital in the eyes of the "world," as well as of the repressions entailed in these dressed-up embodiments of "contemporary civilization." The reverse anthropomorphism in *Rabid Dogs* and *Myth* resonates with the oft-repeated story of the colonial park in Shanghai with a sign forbidding the entrance of both Chinese and dogs. Cao's artist statement for her video exudes resignation and indignation: "We are surely poor dogs, willing to act as animals and locked in the cage of modernization. When will we have the courage to bite our bosses ruthlessly, taking off our masks, peeling off our fur, and becoming a group of real rabid dogs?"[83]

The pieces by Cao and Huang also articulate with the resurgence of woman as nüxing in what Tani Barlow labels market feminism and traces through Chinese thinkers like Li Xiaojiang.[84] In the 1980s, Li led a critique of revolutionary modernity that sought to "recover" woman from the funü subject represented by state organizations. When Deng-era Marxist humanist philosophers critiqued the destruction of individual agency under Mao, Li identified the human subject they aimed to recuperate as male. In response, she theorized a female subject whose dehumanization had taken

INTRO.09 Wang Qingsong, *Forum*, 2001. Chromogenic print, 120 cm × 210 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

INTRO.10 Cao Fei, *Rabid Dogs–Hungry Dog*, 2002. Chromogenic print (of video still), 60 cm × 90 cm. Courtesy of Cao Fei and Vitamin Creative Space.

INTRO.11 Huang Yin, *Imitation Louis Vuitton Advertisement Series–Myth*, 2004. Oil on canvas, 192 cm × 158 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

place most trenchantly at the level of the body and argued that Maoist culture had obliterated natural sex difference and denaturalized women's bodies by requiring conformity to a male standard. Li posited instead an essential woman, whose creative powers lay in her physiological difference and could be realized through the pleasures of reproduction and domestic consumption.[85] Her position gained popular currency, especially among a growing sector of quasi-middle-class women and influenced the rise of cultural formations like nüxing yishu. This move to recuperate feminine

subjectivity, however, also raised questions like those posed by the artistic representation of grinning, groveling canine women about commodification and containment.

In her essay "A Scene in the Fog," feminist cultural critic Dai Jinhua describes 1990s Chinese culture as a "city of mirrors." She writes, "Contemporary Chinese culture resembles a scene in the fog, transfixed between orientalism and occidentalism, interpellated by different, diametrically opposed power centers, existing in a proliferating, multiple, overlapping cultural space. The light optimistic boat is destined to be overloaded with the heritages of premodernity, modernity, Cold War-era and eighties culture."[86] With this "light optimistic boat" metaphorically evoking a dream vision of China achieving global parity through the ferrying of its culture into the world, Dai reads from the surface the swelling currents that pull and batter the craft. *Experimental Beijing* follows the historical moment of Dai's description, as the scene explodes with the millennial fervor of Olympic fireworks, which trail into dust and smoke in the aftermath. It examines the new cultural monuments to China's global future that appeared on the horizon, even as other visions of being in the world glimmered at their powerful edges. It asks what can be gleaned from the ephemeral experiments that flash up from the shadows of history—those excavations of ruins always proximate to the construction site, those inventories of traces that deconstruct and remake from the rubble. As Beijing turned itself over to "enter the world," the work of art collaborated with and subverted this new Chinese Dream. Wang Nengtao's *Subversion–Earth* documents this worlding, as well as the uninscribed spontaneity of the earth, the possibility of subversion by those on the ground. Yin Xiuzhen's *Portable Beijing* shuttles through the world while simultaneously giving shelter to an intimate, tactile history of other forms of social organization and connection. Chen Lingyang's *25:00* glows with the magic hour fantasy of inhabiting the "real/male" world on one's own terms. To place Chinese contemporary art in the expanded field, in "a proliferating, multiple, overlapping cultural space," requires a double vision that holds monumental and ephemeral together.

NOTES

PROLOGUE. Worldly Fables

1 For biographical information on Xu Beihong, see Andrews and Shen, *The Art of Modern China*, 42, 66–69; Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, 68–72.
2 For biographical information on Pan Yuliang, see *Pan Yuliang meishu zuopin xuanji*, 96–103; Khullar, "Parallel Tracks"; Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, 38, 203; Sung, *Redefining Female Talent*, 165–249; Xu, "Early 20th-Century Women Painters in Shanghai," 209–10.
3 Xu Beihong, "I Am Bewildered," 374.
4 "Manifesto of the Art Movement Society," 373.
5 Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, 84.
6 Shi, *Hua hun*.
7 Huang, *Hua hun*.

INTRODUCTION. Chinese Contemporary Art

1 China was first invited to participate in the Venice Biennale in 1980, but officials either unfamiliar with Western conceptions of contemporary art or bent on espousing a socialist message of art by "the people" sent folk art such as papercuts and tapestries. Francesca Dal Lago, who has detailed this history in "Papercuts, Colorful Pictures and Mountains of Shit," also served as consultant to curator Achille Bonito Oliva for the 1993 Biennale exhibit *Passaggio a Oriente* (Passage to the East), which included Chinese and Japanese artists. In 1997, the Chinese government sent academic-style paintings.
2 Director of the 1999 Biennale, Harald Szeemann, curated the exhibit that included this group of artists; see Szeemann and Lavelli, *La Biennale di Venezia*.
3 The first effort to establish a national pavilion occurred in 2003. Due to the outbreak of SARS that summer, the Chinese government cancelled its installation in Venice and exhibited the selected works at the Guangdong Museum of Art instead. See Wang, "Officializing the Unofficial," for a history of the 2003 process that laid the ground for the 2005 Chinese Pavilion in Venice.
4 Kingston, "Far Pavilions."
5 His many public forms of criticism led to a short house arrest in 2010 and subsequent three-month detention in 2011.

6 I draw in my thinking about this conjunction from Povinelli's theorization of late liberalism within the context of neoliberalism; see *Economies of Abandonment*, 1–45.

7 For more on official censorship of art during this period, see Barmé, *In the Red*, 201–4; Gao, "From Elite to Small Man"; and Wu, *Transience* and *Exhibiting Experimental Art in China*.

8 Sassen, *The Global City*.

9 Wang's *Subversion* serves as the catalogue cover image for an exhibit at the Guangdong Museum of Art on the relationship between art and urbanism; see Zhang, *New Urbanism*.

10 Other works exploring the ideological importance of urban aesthetics in reform-era China include Braester, *Painting the City Red*; and Visser, *Cities Surround the Countryside*.

11 For more, see Wang, *High Culture Fever*.

12 I draw here on Claypool's "Metadomesticity," in which she argues that Yin offers a hopeful counterpoint to sociologist Marc Augé's bleak definition of supermodernity: "What I am calling 'metadomesticity' can be conceived in entirely negative terms—we might see it as one aspect of the supermodern world's threatening tracts of dehumanized modular non-places—but through Yin's visual work we can glimpse how it also possesses the potential for reimagining the world, constructing a positive process by which the domestic infiltrates those negative non-places, those gaping 'black holes,' reinvesting them with human meaning."

13 See also Mao, *Chopsticks*.

14 Yin, interview.

15 Gao, *Fengshou*, 21.

16 Chen, artist statement.

17 Lü, *Zhongguo dangdai yishu shi*; Gao, *The Wall*; Wu, *Contemporary Chinese Art*.

18 For a review of and reflection on this growing body of scholarship, see Hershatter, *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century*, and "Disquiet in the House of Gender."

19 I draw on the concept of political grammar and its importance in feminist storytelling from Hemming, *Why Stories Matter*.

20 The Chinese term *liumang* consists of two characters, *liu* meaning "to flow" and *mang* referring to "common people." It connotes an "outsider" identity, someone who has fallen out of family, group, or state relations and therefore is potentially subversive. In the Chinese translation of the *Communist Manifesto*, the German term *lumpenproletariat* became *liumang wuchanzhe* (hooligan proletariat). The criminalization of hooliganism—activities such as gang fights, sexual assault on women, and disruption of public order—was codified under a provision of China's 1979 Criminal Law and subsequently used to also police homosex between men. This historical anxiety about wide-ranging male activities outside of heteronormative kinship demonstrates the need for deconstruction of gendered masculine and feminine norms together. Dutton, *Streetlife China*, 62–74; Kang, "The Decriminalization and Depathologization of Homosexuality in China."

21 Andrews and Gao, "The Avant-Garde's Challenge to Official Art."

22 Wu, *Contemporary Chinese Art*, 5–13. Several other important exhibits at the National Art Museum of China marked the 1980s "culture fever" moment: retrospectives of U.S. Pop Art figure Robert Rauschenberg and French fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent in 1985, and a 1988 nude art show backed by the Ministry of Culture, which drew almost a quarter of a million visitors in eighteen days.

23 Kraus critiques this "Godzilla model" framing of China's arts as unsatisfying "because it imagines a Chinese state that is both consistent and omnipotent, while the record shows a polity far more internally divided, erratic, and ineffectual. The Godzilla model is not much better when it comes to artists, whom it romanticizes as heroes and rebel-dissident" (*The Party and the Arty in China*, 143). He presents an alternative narrative of artists in a protracted struggle for professional status and security. In "Arrière-pensée on an Avant-Garde," Barmé cynically predicts that Chinese artists' response to this Western fetishization and market demand will lead to "a new avant-garde art-to-order: dissent on tap" (82).

24 For an overview of these overseas exhibits, see Erickson, "The Reception in the West of Experimental Mainland Chinese Art of the 1990s."

25 Smaller, more focused exhibits of Chinese contemporary art in the United States preceded *Inside Out*, including *Painting the Chinese Dream: Chinese Art Thirty Years After the Revolution* (Brooklyn Museum, 1983); "*I Don't Want to Play Cards with Cézanne" and Other Works: Selections from the Chinese "New Wave" and "Avant-Garde" Art of the Eighties* (Asia Pacific Museum, Pasadena, 1991); *Fragmented Memory: The Chinese Avant-Garde in Exile* (Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, 1993); and *China's New Art, Post-1989* (University of Oregon Art Museum, Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Salina Arts Center, Chicago Cultural Center, and San Jose Museum of Art, 1995–1998).

26 See for example, Cheng, "What Would Mao Think?"

27 Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"

28 Hershatter, Honig, and Rofel, "Reflections on the Fourth World Conference of Women, Beijing and Huairou"; Welland, "What Women Will Have Been."

29 Lin, *Yuan nüxing yishu*; Liao, *Zhongguo dangdai yishu zhong de nüxing fangshi*.

30 Jia, "Preface," 9.

31 Werner, "The Half of the Sky," 37n3.

32 Werner, "The Half of the Sky," 37n3.

33 Some artists I talked with disparaged the use of symbols that readily identified a work as Chinese, such as Maoist iconography, as lazy pandering to a foreign market. They used the term *fuhaozhuyi* (symbolism) to describe this trend, but in an ironic way with a meaning more like trademark-ism.

34 Yao, *In Production Mode*.

35 See for example Abu-Lughod, *Writing Women's Worlds*; Behar and Gordon, *Women Writing Culture*; Tsing, *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen*; and Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*. Haraway, "Situated Knowledge" influenced this feminist turn in anthropology.

36 Faier, *Intimate Encounters*; Faier and Rofel, "Ethnographies of Encounter."

37 Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 32.

38 Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 33.

39 Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 34.

40 Chinese artists of the contemporary era employ a wider array of media than those represented by this interpretation of *dangdai yishu*. Calligraphers and ink painters continue to practice these "traditional" and, according to some, more Chinese art forms in the current moment and so can be considered contemporary artists. However, with a few notable crossover exceptions such as Xu Bing and Gu Wenda, they tend to be labeled under categories such as "new ink painting" (*xin shuimo hua*) or "national painting" (*guohua*), understood to be more firmly rooted in China and its diasporas. Concerted effort goes into differentiating "contemporary" and "traditional" forms, even though artists often work in both. The phrase "contemporary Chinese art" risks emphasizing the Chinese-ness of the art, a distinction I am more interested in analyzing than reifying.

41 These magazines include titles such as *Yishu shijie* (Art world), *Xiandai yishu* (Modern art/translated by the editors as Contemporary art), *Yishu dangdai* (Art contemporary/translated by the editors as Art China), and *Xin chao* (New wave/translated by the editors as Next wave). Many other popular publications on contemporary urban life had regular sections devoted to contemporary art.

42 Tsing, *Friction*.

43 Said, *Orientalism*, 25.

44 Danto, "The Artworld," 580.

45 Becker, *Art Worlds*.

46 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*.

47 Gell, *Art and Agency*.

48 Tsing, "The Global Situation."

49 Clifford, *Routes*, 69.

50 Nochlin, *Women, Art, and Power*; Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*; Pollock, *Differencing the Canon*.

51 Liu, Karl, and Ko, *The Birth of Chinese Feminism*, 53–71. While often referred to as He Zhen by Chinese historians, she signed her published works He-Yin Zhen, including her mother's maiden name as part of a compound family name. All of her extant writings first appeared in the anarchist-leaning feminist journal *Tianyi bao* (Natural justice), which He-Yin edited in Tokyo. This journal also published the first translation of *The Communist Manifesto* into Chinese in 1908.

52 For a nuanced discussion of *nannü* as an analytic category, see the introduction by Liu, Karl, and Ko, *Birth of Chinese Feminism*, 1–26.

53 Welland, *Cruel/Loving Bodies* and *Cruel/Loving Bodies 2*.

54 This formulation of feminist art arose from my collaboration with Sonal Khullar in our introductory address for an international conference we coorganized, New Geographies of Feminist Art: China, Asia, and the World, held at the University of Washington in November 2012. In her keynote address at the conference, Shu-mei Shih similarly discussed feminist art in terms of an ethics of

responsibility, in which "feminism becomes the medium, and is no longer merely the content."

55 Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 110.

56 Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 111.

57 Judge, *The Precious Raft of History*, 87–95.

58 Bateson, "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia," 206–12.

59 Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind*, 3–21.

60 Khullar, *Worldly Affiliations*.

61 Chen and Araeen, "A Conversation," 24.

62 Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 171.

63 Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*.

64 Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," 260; Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 171.

65 Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," 243.

66 Karl, *Staging the World*.

67 In *The Lure of the Modern*, Shu-mei Shih's study of the cultural politics of semicolonialism in Chinese literary modernism, she defines semicolonialism as "the specific effects of multiple imperialist presences in China and their fragmentary colonial geography (largely confined to coastal cities) and control, as well as the resulting social and cultural formations" (31).

68 This national narrative of colonial humiliation can itself, however, serve imperialist tendencies, as it selectively overlooks the Chinese state's hegemonic Han incursions in contested ethnic minority regions.

69 Hevia, "Looting Beijing: 1860, 1900," 198.

70 Hevia points out the intimate connection of the word *loot* to British imperial expansion; it entered English from Hindi via Sanskrit [Hindi *lut*, *lutna*, from Sanskrit *lunt(h)*-rob] in the eighteenth century.

71 Throughout the nineteenth century, Chinese and Japanese pictorial works entered the British Museum catalogued as "prints and drawings," rather than as Oriental objects. Craig Clunas comments, in "China in Britain," on how this transitional moment, before Chinese ceramics and antiquities became the consolidated mainstay of "Chinese Art," has now come to seem categorically illogical: "At a time when Chinese ceramics were still, at least administratively, the same things as canoes and weapons, a Hiroshige print was the same as a Rembrandt print" (45).

72 Clunas, "China in Britain," 47.

73 In *Vision, Race, and Modernity*, Deborah Poole examines the "visual economy" through which photographic images such as these shaped modern conceptions of "racial difference."

74 The postcard, produced by the Belgian company Nels, includes the following explanatory text: "The feet of young girls are compressed with cloth bands in order to obtain 'small feet,' which constitute one of the elements of Chinese female beauty." In the full, original postcard (a cropped version appeared in the *Beijing Youth News* article), the photo of the woman is juxtaposed with one of a "Mendiant Chinois," an elderly man dressed in rags leaning on a cane and holding out a

begging bowl. This ethnographic depiction, as part of the popular production of postcards sent around the world, equates China's traditional female practices with poverty and decay. Both postcards appear in Chen, *Jiu meng zhong jing*, 183–84.

75 Chen, "Sheng zhuang de jixing."

76 Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*.

77 Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China*, 215–16. This painting appeared on two magazine covers in 1960: the August issue of *China Reconstructs* and the September issue of *Meishu* (Art).

78 Barlow, The *Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*.

79 Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," 690.

80 Andrews, "Women Artists in Twentieth-Century China"; Zheng, "The Shanghai Fine Arts College: Art Education and Modern Women Artists in the 1920s and 1930s."

81 Post-1968 French intellectuals and cultural critics present one notable exception to this Western attitude toward the arts under Mao. See for example, special edition of *Cahiers du Cinema*, 236–37 (March–April 1972).

82 Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*. In "Contemporary Asian Art and Its Western Reception," Clarke also notes the structural persistence of a colonial worlding in the contextualization of Chinese art in popular American art history textbooks. His analysis of the popular *Gardner's Art through the Ages* demonstrates how its authors "create a picture of Chinese art as static and homogenous" (240).

83 Wu and Phillips, *Between Past and Future*, 203.

84 Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*.

85 Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*, 253–54.

86 Dai, "A Scene in the Fog," 72.

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1 Asia Art Archive's online collection contains a digital copy of the invitation, www.aaa.org.hk (accessed in 2017).

2 Liu, *Translingual Practice*.

3 Gao, *Total Modernity and the Avant-Garde*, 166.

4 Competing terms like *shiyan* (experimental) and *dangdai* (contemporary) eventually grew more common.

5 This periodical published out of Tianjin ran from 1999 to 2002.

6 Wu Hung developed the idea of "remaking Beijing" in a book with this title, which focuses on Tiananmen Square as locus for the transformation political space and symbology.

7 Benjamin, "N: On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress," 462. My method of montage draws on Convolute N of Benjamin's arcades project, in which he develops the theoretical and methodological framework for the overall work.

8 Dewar, "Beijing Report."

9 Wang, "Culture as Leisure and Culture as Capital," 88–89.