

亚

现象



首届CAFAM未来展
亚现象·中国青年艺术生态报告
提名集

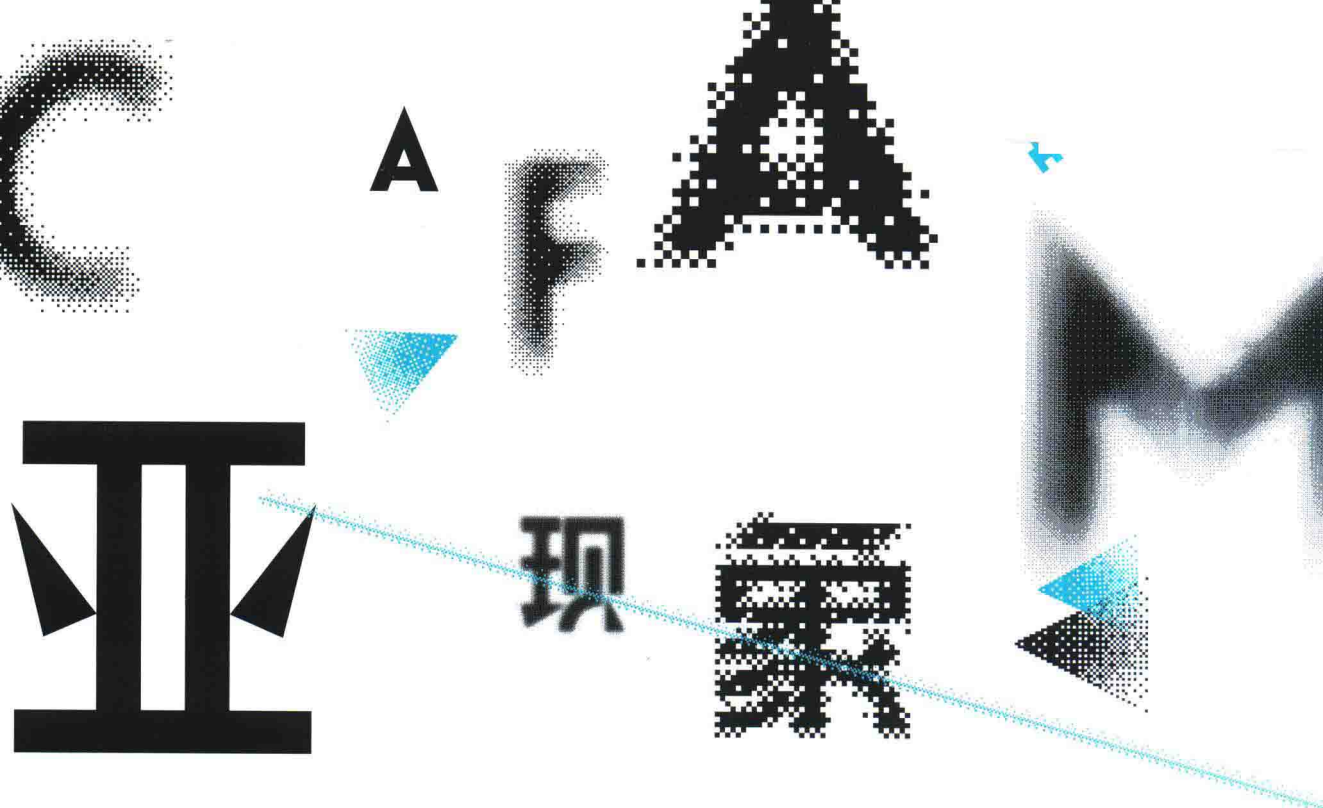
The First "CAFAM·Future" Exhibition
Sub-Phenomena: Report on
the State of Chinese Young Art
Nomination

主编 / 徐冰
副主编 / 王璜生、冯博一、王春辰
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CAFAM未来展



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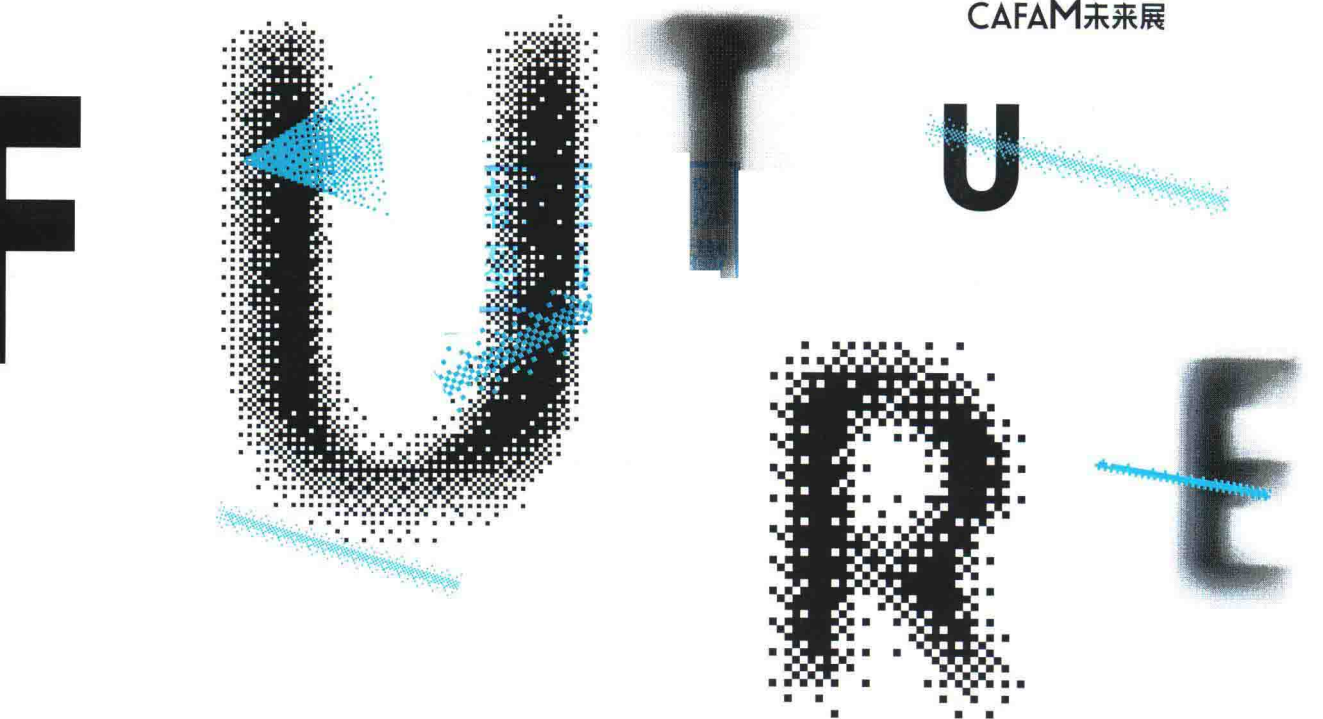


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题释

这个关于年轻艺术家的项目，是我们一直想做的事情。此项目针对中国 [包括港澳台地区及海外] 35 岁以下青年一代艺术家的创作生态，以田野考察的方式，提供具有研究价值的视觉样本与分析报告，并以预示中国当代艺术未来某种发展趋向的专题性展览为核心，对样本与现象做新视角及客观的分析，描绘其轨迹的弧线，这条弧线的延长趋势，也许可以为下一个阶段及未来中国艺术的走向，提示材料和依据。未来存在于现实的展开之中，而现实则存在于对未来的承诺与想象之中，现实和未来之间的关系正是艺术生态变化的关键所在。

这个项目采取了相对广泛的考察、征集的方式。首先邀请国内外 80 位关注青年艺术创作的策展人、评论家、教授、艺术家和艺术机构负责人等组成“提名委员会”，每人提名 6 位艺术家，并给出提名理由。最后共有 286 位艺术家获得提名（即本《提名集》的内容）。为了体现“CAFAM·未来展”的独特性，以总策展人徐冰、亚历山大·孟璐（Alexandra Munroe，美国古根海姆美术馆策展人）和王璜生、冯博一、王春辰、蔡萌构成的策展团队，对被提名人选及其代表性作品进行考察、梳理、研究，以及对现存的若干创作问题和可能影响未来趋势的现象展开分析，反复讨论，最终遴选出 95 位艺术家的近 200 件作品，作为案例展出，从中归纳出“蔓生长、自媒体、微抵抗、宅空间、浅生活、未知数”六种视觉修辞，由此构成以“亚现象·中国青年艺术生态报告”为主题的展览。展览开幕后，将出版对 95 位具有代表性的艺术家和作品进行更深入解读的《展览集》。展览期间，我们还将展开由青年艺术家自己主持的对话和一系列关于“青年亚文化”、“国际知名策展人谈青年艺术”讲座，以及与“未来策展人”座谈等学术活动，并集结为《议论集》，试图为中国当代青年艺术生态和未来趋向的研究提供一手的文献资料和数据。

不同的视角和意图，会对“青年”的概念有所不同。我们以 35 岁为限度，并非依据科学和生理的界定，而是出于中国特定的历史阶段对“代际”的影响。这些 1977 年以后出生的人，在他们来到这个世界上时，并不知道这一年的开始对这个国家的重要，和对他们一生的意义。

所谓“亚现象”是从青年“亚文化”的概念演绎而来的。青年亚文化是与社会主流文化相对应的非主流、局部的、潜在的文化现象，代表的是处于边缘地位青年群体的利益，最突出的特点就是相对于成年人社会秩序来说的非主流、边缘化和叛逆性特征。而“现象”是指能够通过参照多方专业人士的考察、观测到的青年艺术生态的事实，以及他们在与多变的社会现实中，在角逐、参与过程中，所表现出来的立场、态度、关联性与存在方式。

在这里还想说明的是：在中国，活跃的诸多类型艺术家，基本上都有在美术院校学习的共同背景，他们的成长、对艺术的理解都与中国美术院校总体艺术教育理念和方式，有着直接或博弈的关联。这些携带着学院基因、又在广阔的艺术世界中积极创造的青年艺术家离开学校后的表现，为当代美术学院教育的发展，以及与学院文化之外的艺术生态的关系的研究，可提供有价值的思考参数。这也是由中央美术学院提议、由学院美术馆主办该展览的基本诉求和理由之一。

方式与判断

存身于每一个时代所依赖的文化处境以及经济状态，决定着一代的价值观念、思维方法和行为模式，造就着他们的活法和人生定位。我们通过对他们的创作与社会文化之间的反映关系，考察生长于1977年后的青年艺术生态。尽管按时间的代际分期不甚科学和准确，也不能较为完整地包容复杂多变的创作形态，也许还会消弥或疏漏某些既有的文化现象与脉络，但这只是为了锁定和深掘一个阶段性特定的课题而已。在策划中，我们尽量以多维的视角与融合性态度，离开既有的“策展人”之眼，或隔代相望的习惯，试着从他们的视角，尊重青年艺术家对艺术的个人立场，这包括从内容到形式、从语言到媒介等方式的各种实验——可归纳为两种基本的实验方式：一种是某种艺术传统内部的实验，一种是传统之外的实验。传统内部的实验是对传统艺术门类自身语言和风格的推进；传统外部的实验则注重的是年轻一代对现存艺术系统或边界的触碰。这两类实验都离不开传统内部与外部的元素与养料，其结果都带有某种革命性的内容。各种来自于艺术内部与外部的复杂因素，最终由优秀艺术家落实于对“艺术语言”的创造与提升上。所以对艺术语言的深度挖掘、新提示、创造力、实验性、未来生长性，是我们判断、评选这次参展艺术家的基本考量。同时，我们也试图摆脱以往单纯从作品性来判断当代性体现的单向度、同质化的线性思维，而注重更能够说明这一代人整体存在处境和行为方式的艺术家，包括他们的自省、反思和对艺术、对生活、对未来的基本立场和态度等多维度因素的考察。也就是说，对作品乃至艺术家的分析已经扩展并演绎到他们与时代、现实关系的想法、言论和行为的整体状态之中。对其综合质量、对当下文明的敏锐度、创造性的艺术转化能力、对社会同代人的影响及未来的生长性的考量，更能够帮助我们分析其作品“艺术”的部分。对年轻艺术家作品的理解更需要如此。

自我与认同

这一代人的成长经验和记忆，伴随着中国社会转型的混杂与速度。如果说，他们是在比父辈相对稳定的政治环境中长大成人、在不确定的经济与价值观的社会生活中体验人生，那么，年轻人面对的考验不得不以自己的选择加以面对，而不像上世纪50、60年代出生的艺术家，在稳定的计划经济与社会压抑中生存、在政治运动中被规定性地接受时代的裹挟与摆布，从而在创作中，表现出对国家命运的直接关注，或将问题意识表述为“环境”支配的无能为力的痛苦，在有限的艺术空间中做着推进艺术的努力。当新一代已经有机会在一种普遍的、碎片化的个体命运中展开自身的选择时，他们的作品反映出与过去不同的、多样化的实现自我认同、自我放逐的“蔓生长”方式，也就不难理解了。

中国作为新崛起的社会文化形态，正在对焦出新的规范和秩序，这种规范和秩序乃是建立在市场化与早期资本积累的基础上。因此，这种背景使青年一代人的表现，带有一种“物化”的情感，具有消费主义文化的特征。在消费中发现自己，彰显个体生命的存在价值。个体生命的历史和存在被“物”流通与消费，并赋予其越来越大的意义，这是一种个体生存实在经验的感知渠道。这种经验不需要对现实的反抗，而是和现实达成的一种辩证关系。因为，基本生存和个体思维的空间，对于他们来讲不是一个问题，他们的问题是选择，即做什么和如何做的问题。他们摆脱掉艺术干预生活的一厢情愿，从上代人的“社会叙事”过渡到更倾向于营

造自己的话语空间，通过个性化的语言表达自己的认知和判断。当然这里也包含着某种“微抵抗”的批判意识，抑或还可以嬉皮式地、无所谓式地对主流文化无视与消解。但他们已经不存在出现于上世纪 80、90 年代文化界集体式的、普遍的与周边环境的紧张关系，这些东西已经不再是严重干扰，并需要加以排除的、或与之对立的。新一代人是把艺术看作是做事情的前提，他们是首先接受了这些前提，然后再看看这种处境之下自己能够做些什么。因而在他们的作品中，你能够感受到一种致力于创作或行为本身的自律，他们将自己调整到一个自由创作者的位置上，一种比较纯粹的心态与表达。

适应与变化

曾几何时，社会机器的稳定性和个体在其机器运转中的明确角色，是一个被社会所重视、被文化所强化的价值。身份和性别的严格区分、固定而重复的工作、国家的安排、户口的稳定性，所有这些都使得“一贯性”成为生活保证与幸福的核心指标。然而，随着封闭社会“一切坚固的东西都烟消云散了”之后，流动性取代了一贯性。现在对于青年一代来说，重要的是选择与适应变化的能力——适应新的栖居地、新的职业、新的关系、新的性别角色以及新的技术。个人在其中无法继续依靠被教育、父母认同的习惯取向，如家庭、规则和信仰等，他们必须每天从生活的无穷变化中界定自己。因为当人们的生活不再“被管理”和“被安排”时，预测未来的需要就变得格外紧迫。它反映了当代认同的特殊的灵变性，人们被迫地对那些从未谋面的人、二手信息是否值得信赖做出判断，预测风险的努力变成一种自我防御机制。由于缺少坚实的锚定点及权威感，除了求救于自我，个人不得不转向大众或市场，寻求对自己的感觉与判断的确认。这就形成了这代人主体追求的自我认同方式。在全球范围内，制度对个人的掌控在弱化。制度构造的基本功能是为个人与周边关系提供相互制约的衡定性，现在，这种能力变得时断时续、困境迭出，开始不具备说服力。个人无可避免地被抛给其自身的主体经验，而社会情境稳定的认同也就丧失了共识的基础。造成这种状况的因素有很多，其核心原因是数码技术对人类生活方式的改变，思维与交流距离的改变，全球化使各种价值观得以同时摆到一个平面上来观看，所引发出多样而深刻的变化。

因此，这些在物质主义、消费主义、碎片化时代出生的青年人注重感官的、即刻的、平面的“浅生活”体验，这构成了一类年轻人的生活方式与态势。多元化是新时代价值观的特征，多层次的多种价值取向，最外在的显示或许可以在他们“宅空间”的兴趣里，从“无所谓”的态度中体现出来。作为青春生活的亲历者，没有什么人可以替代他们这一代人自己的青春体验。青春与消费主义、挥霍青春之间的关系向来密切。青春世界的想象与消费主义的双重力量，连同其生机勃勃与厌倦不堪是他们主要的内心冲突。这些阳光的、自我的、理想的、立志的、忧伤的、反叛的、放纵的、出轨的、穿越的青春体验，构成了他们作品主要的题材内容，并成为他们创作的出发点和选择。这一出发点本身也就是“认识你自己，成为你自己”的一种青年生命本真和自我觉醒的方式。他们通过个体与个体空间的关系，与父母的关系、与朋友或宠物的关系，认真地表达着他们与这个世界问题的关系，这种选择是从自我认同、并非从自我的现实处境来抵达自我诉求和展露自我形象的。所以，他们大多遵从于一个自足的世界、通俗的情节模式；时尚的趣味充溢着优雅的品格，对传统与父辈经历的想象；充满着夸张的心事呓语和不知从何而来的迷茫气息，有时不动声色，却又惊心动魄。

确定与不确定

当现实中的问题越来越纠结时，生活越来越多地在网络上展开，而对新技术的“垄断”成为新一代基因中先天的优势，旧有的沟通、交流、观看等方式被全面改变。新一代人在虚拟空间享受着“随心所欲”的实在感与释放感，这一点较之上代人有着明显的优长性。在网络世界里容纳了像宇宙一样无边的信息和大于任何学校的知识容量，如此之多的异质性群体，使人们得以见到大量知之甚少的事物或素未谋面的人，不断地与之展开不同程度的互动，参与和左右事件和他人的生活。这个虚拟世界吸纳网络族大量的注意力，与现实混淆，使生活与思维更加“片面化”、“私人化”、“去私人化”。当然，这也令青年一代关注、传播公众话题的方式改变了，与社会发生关系的方式改变了。互联网提供的不仅只是海量信息，使人目不暇接，更要命的是对信息的应对和如何处理，让你陷入“意识被绑架”的生活中。接纳信息做出反馈，这机制在网络上运行得无比快捷通畅，它很大程度上取代着包括艺术在内的传统媒体形式，以及当代艺术出现以来所寻找的个性声音发出的有效性。新型的社会化媒体和社交方式带来了一种新型的社会关系，这种社会关系又反过来会影响独立的个体。因为，尽管可以有一种无所不能的幻觉，或依赖于他人来确认自尊，但并未因此解放自己，使自己获得独立性或者个体存在的荣耀。相反，这种自由增加了他们的不安和困境，认同又普遍存在着焦虑，越来越想取悦他人，而不顾这样做所带来的个人和社会代价。“自媒体”现象与青年当代艺术的关系是此项目考察的内容之一。

中国处在这个越来越多样并充满试验性的时代——它不知所终地将把我们带向未知的现代化过程，使一切都变化得急速而又扑朔迷离。在一个仍在不断转型的时代里，事物是那样的复杂，许多边缘都是模糊的。人的天然欲望、相互间的交往、权力的运作，包括我们以为透彻的金钱关系，其实都并非那么清晰可辨，又无法划分定位。特别是对于刚踏入社会的部分年轻人，造就了他们漂浮的、缺乏节制的游离状态。他们的创作没有界定，不设终极，而是一种“浅生活”或“泛生活”的存在状态。这种自我抑制或自我放任的艺术转化，触及了一种情感上或者心理上的真实，给孤绝的情感报以自我尊重的回馈。也许，他们希望抓到的是在“不确定中”张望到不确定方式，而并非如以往几代艺术家那样，重视艺术与作品本身的“确定意义”。

疏离与边缘

在每个时代终结或交错之际，都有那么一些存活着的精灵，自知而又茫然地存在于边缘世界。他们是一些尴尬的、不愿与世俗苟同的青年人，他们无论做人还是创作都保持着疏离的姿态，从边缘出发，走向边缘，并对于一切习以为常的、理所当然的惯性思维发出质疑与否定的嚎叫。边缘是他者，是不认同；边缘还是差异，也是多样性的显现。因此，低廉、粗俗、做作、夸张的风格和多种元素的杂和，构成了“恶之花”般的话语方式，将星星点点的美丽与浪漫镶嵌在黑暗之间。它们总是用一种悲剧和认命的眼神注视着你的观看，偶尔显露诡异的峥嵘，却足以让我们伴着突如其来的惊悚被打动。也许他们对艺术的极端选择的魅力，就在于那种恍惚，那种对感官刺激的迷恋和宣泄，在现实喧嚣中呈现出癫狂般的自由和异类趣味。无论现实生活如何变迁，艺术还是要做的。边缘状态中的艺术也是现实生活的一种折射，他们在各自文化见闻里搜索适合演绎自我的语汇，去接受并信服于一个视觉图像里的现实世界。

结语

或许我们也在询问，怎样的社会状态诱发了他们的价值取向、创作观念和审美趣味？而在一个淤积了内聚活力、欲望，甚至什么形态都可能发生的、极具实验性的社会机制里，我们相信这是凝聚个体艺术创造力的共有空间，但当我们检视了这些被提名的青年艺术家的作品时，确实有一些“未知数”式的、难以归类的或在艺术语言上具有突破力的创作，使我们看到中国艺术在未来，为全球艺术提示新思维的端倪。但不能回避的是，作品普遍缺乏更具原创力的，突出的艺术创作个案的状况，这也是引发我们对始终强势的西方文化、我们特有的历史、教育方式、现实资源的使用及利弊的思考；有什么东西是我们特有的，又是对未来新文化建设有益的元素。因此，我们希望从这些年轻人的作品中，了解到青年艺术家的“现状是如何发生的”线索与脉络，与那些相对成熟的艺术领域之间是一种怎样的关系。看到的不仅是与历史的曲折联系、对现实的敏感，也有对未来的判断。正是这些现象表层背后，潜隐着深层的时代文化背景。健康的艺术生态是由丰富的“艺术物种”相互的比照与衬映所构成，在相生相克的关系中生长，为适应环境的变化，由各部分的贡献，滋生出新的种类与能量。艺术生态中的亚现象，经常是对气候变化最敏感、又容易被忽视的群类。它存在于其他物种之间的地带，与成熟物种一样，在整体“艺术生态群”中发挥着各自的“蝴蝶效应”。

2012年7月18日

Xu Bing / Alexandra Munroe

Wang Huangsheng / Feng Boyi / Wang Chunchen / Tsai Meng

Theme and Interpretation

It has been our longtime goal to organize this exhibition focused on the new generation of young artists. The exhibition examines the creative ecology of Chinese artists (including Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and overseas) under the age of 35. The thorough investigation presents valuable visual materials and analyses, which point to potential future directions of development of contemporary Chinese art. Organized around a set of themes and concepts, the exhibition also offers an objective analysis of the visual materials, with new perspectives on their particular movements. Extending these views, the exhibition is a point of reference for the next phase and the future of contemporary Chinese art. The future lies in the extension of the present, while reality exists in the imagination and promise of the future. The transformation of art ecology stems from the relationship between our present reality and the future.

The exhibition is grounded in extensive observation and compilation of materials. Eighty domestic and overseas curators, critics, artists and directors of art organizations paying attention to the creation of young artists were invited to form the "Nomination Committee", where each person nominated six young artists and elaborated on their reasons for nomination. A total of 286 artists were nominated [see the "Nomination"]. To manifest the uniqueness of "CAFAM:Future Exhibition", under the leadership of the curatorial team consisting of lead curators Xu Bing and Alexandra Munroe [Senior Curator, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York] working closely with the curatorial team Wang Huangsheng, Feng Boyi, Wang Chunchen and Tsai Meng, the project conducted a thorough organization, examination and review of the nominated artists and their representative works, as the curators analyzed the current issues of creativity and other trends that might impact its future development. After intensive discussions, the team selected near 200 artworks by 95 artists for the exhibition. The discussions also led to the conclusion of "Rampant Growth, Self-Media, Micro-Resistance, Otaku Space, Shallow Life, Unknown" as the six keywords in the show's visual language. They are the basis for the exhibition's theme, "Sub-Phenomena: Report on the State of Chinese Young Art". The "Exhibition" book will be published after the show's opening, and will present an in-depth interpretation of the 95 artists and their representative works. During the exhibition, we will organize a series of discussions presided by the young artists, and other academic activities about "Youth Subculture", "Internationally-renowned Curators Talking about Young Artists' Art" and discussions with "The Future Curators". The conversations will be collected in the "Discussions" book, which will be a source of scholarly materials for the studies of the art state of contemporary Chinese young artists, as well as its future developments.

Different perspectives and visuals mean varying interpretations of the concept of "youth". We set the age limit at 35 not because of any scientific or biological concepts; rather, we focus on the particular "generation" that was nurtured by specific historical eras of China. Born after 1977, these artists were unaware of the significance of this year for the country and for their own lives.

The so-called "sub-phenomena" is a variation of the concept of youth "subculture". Youth subculture is a cultural phenomenon that is peripheral, partial and covert as compared to the society's mainstream culture. It represents the interest of marginalized youths, as it is distinguished by the non-mainstream, marginalized and rebellious forces against accepted social orders. "Phenomena" refers to the overview of art ecology of young artists, as derived from the observations of various professionals. It also illuminates the artists' involvement in and struggles against the ever-changing social reality, including their convictions, attitudes, connections and modes of existence.

There are some other reasons to explain our view: most artists who are active in today's art scene in China were trained in fine art academies. To varying degrees, their personal growth, creative pursuits and understanding of art were conditioned by the art education philosophies and formulas of China's fine art institutions, obeying or combating. With their background in fine art education, these artists have thrived on breaking new dimensions in the wide art world. Their artistic developments are important references for the broader art ecology and trends, which lie beyond the development of academic art education and the culture of these institutions. This is one of our key reasons and convictions for this exhibition proposed by CAFA and held at CAFA Art Museum [CAFAM].

Methodologies and Assessment

The values, mindsets and modes of behavior of each generation are conditioned by the cultural and economic circumstances of each era. These factors determine the lifestyles and positions of a specific generation. Through their artistic creations, aesthetics, modes of existence and relations with the society's culture, we investigate the art ecology of the post-'77 generation of artists. As it is neither scientific nor precise, the chosen time frame may not give a comprehensive overview of the evolving creative ecology, as it overlooks certain existing cultural phenomena and paths. The choice of this time frame is to specify a particular subject for further exploration. In our curatorial efforts, we have strived for multiplicity and inclusiveness. We attempt to go beyond our individual curator's perspective to understand and respect the individual convictions of these young artists, especially from their own points of view. This includes the experimentations of content, form, language, media and other elements. There are two essential modes of experimentation: the first is experimentation within a particular artistic tradition; the second is experimentation outside the artistic tradition. Experimentation within an artistic tradition is an exploration of its intrinsic

language and style; experimentation outside the artistic tradition emphasizes the clashes between the young generation and existing artistic systems or boundaries. These two modes of experimentation revolve around the internal and external elements of tradition, and the results embody a certain revolutionary facet. For the complexity of these internal and external elements, outstanding artists recreate and enhance the "artistic language" in their creations. In this sense, the exploration of artistic language, revelation, creativity, experimentation and future growth are the criteria for our curatorial assessment of artists for this exhibition. Meanwhile, we attempt to break away from our previous mindsets of one-dimensionality and homogenization in assessing the contemporary expression of artworks. Rather, we focus on those artists who can manifest the existential circumstances and modes of behavior of today's generation, including their self-reflection, views and attitudes towards art, life and the future. In other words, the consideration of artists and their artworks has been extended towards understanding their thinking, comments, and modes of behavior regarding the present era and reality. The artworks are a key dimension of such examination. Their multi-dimensionality, synthesis, sensitivity toward the present moment of culture are crucial aspects of this study, as are their ability to transform through art, and to create substantial impact on the present generation and future growth of art, thought and culture.

Self and Recognition

The experience and memories of this generation echoed the complexity and pace of China's social transformation. In a way, we can say that they grew up in a period of relative political stability as compared to their parents' era, yet they have lived through tumultuous social and economic change, uncertainty and volatility. For this reason, these young people must handle the challenges in life by making their own choices. This is contrary to those who were born in the 1950s and 1960s, a generation that lived under the steady planning economy and system of social oppression; it was their destiny to be controlled by political movements at the time. For this reason, this older generation of artists expressed their concern for the country's fate in their works, or illustrated the issues in the representations of pain and helplessness imposed by "circumstances". They thrived on promoting the development of art within rigorous confines. When the new generation has the autonomy to make choices in their fragmented lives, their works reflect a departure from the past in their diverse actualization and recognition of the self. In this context, the "Rampant Growth" as a mode of self-exile is not hard to comprehend.

As an emerging form of society and culture, China is adjusting its focus to create new rules and orders which have their basis in early marketization and capital accumulating. These elements become "objectified" affections in the lives of the young generation and they denote the characteristics of consumerism. Consumption is a mode of self-discovery, of the existence and value of the individual life. The individual life, history and existence are imbued with growing meanings through "objectification" and consumption. This is a channel of recognition

of the individual experience. This experience doesn't call for the resistance against reality, but achieves an interactive interpretation with reality. Therefore, the realm of essential existence and individual mindset is not a problem for this generation. Their question is what problems they may face, and how they choose to handle them. They seek to break free from the assumption of art as an interfering force to the society, so they transform from the "grand narratives" of the previous generations to their individual realms of artistic language. The individual language is an expression of one's recognition and judgment. Such comprehension embodies a certain critical self-awareness that takes on the form of "Micro-Resistance", and it may even be a counter force or disdain towards the mainstream culture. However, these attempts no longer contain the collective tension against the surroundings in the cultural realm through the 1980s and 1990s. They are not interfering forces that need to be excluded or opposed. The new generation sees and accepts art as a pre-condition, from which they review what they can do in the given circumstances. In the artworks, you can feel a single-minded focus on the act of creation, or the self-discipline of such creation. The artists have adopted the position of a free creator, the expression and mentality of a greater level of purity.

Adaptability and Change

At different points in the past, the stability of social mechanisms and the clear individual roles in these mechanisms were the priorities in a society or culture. The distinction of status and gender, regular and monotonous employments, government arrangements, and stability of the registered individual residence were keys to the order of living and happiness. Nevertheless, as the solidity of the conservative society collapsed, rampant mobility has replaced consistency in this era. To today's youth, choice and adaptability are the keywords--to adapt to new locations of residence, new professions, new relationships, new gender roles and new technology. The individual can no longer fall back into positions that were previously approved by education or their parents, such as families, rules and religion. They must define themselves in the accelerating changes of everyday life. The prediction of future becomes a pressing issue when lives are no longer "managed" or arranged by others. It reflects on the unique volatility of the contemporary life. People are increasingly pressured to gauge whether they can trust the strangers or second-hand information they come across, and the evaluation of risk becomes a self-defense mechanism. As the individuals lack an anchor or a sense of authority, except depending on themselves they look to the public or the mass market, in search of confirmation of one's feelings and judgments. This has cultivated the search for self-recognition among the young generation. In the global context, institutional control of the individuals has weakened. The basic function of order structures is to create stability of the relationships between individuals and their surroundings. At present, this power is constantly being disrupted and it is losing its credibility. The individual has no choice but to process one's own experience, while stable social identification has lost its basis as a common understanding. There are many factors contributing to this situation. A core reason is the evolution of human lives because

of the digital technological development. The changes of mindsets, interactions, and ways of communication, the transparency of different values and their accessibility to us all are forces that create such diverse and profound changes.

For the young generation born in the age of materialism, consumerism and fragmentation, the instant gratification of a "Shallow Life" is its common way of living. Diversity is a standout value of the new era, as it calls for multiple dimensions and values. The most external manifestation may be found in the "Otaku Space", a certain "carefree" attitude of these young people who are the masters of their youthful experience. There have always been close relations between youth and consumerism. In the youthful universe, imagination and consumerism have double powers. Great ambition and debilitated heart become the main conflict in young people's minds. These experiences are energetic, self-centered, idealistic, determined, sorrowful, defiant, rebellious, unconventional and transcendent; they form the central subjects of the artists' works, and they function as the starting points and choices of the creation. This is what it means by "Know yourself; become yourself", a genuine mode of self-realization in one's youth. Through the relationships between individuals, the relationships with parents, the relationships with friends or even pets, these young people express their relationships with the world. This represents the choice to achieve one's self-fulfillment and self-image through self-recognition rather than through external, practical circumstances. They tend to follow the dramatic formula of a self-sufficient world: elegance from fashion tastes, fantasy about their parents' lives experience, sentimentality about the world, and unexplained sorrows and confusion. These emotions may seem like the imprints of one's existence, yet they are staggering in their unexpected arrivals.

Certainty and Uncertainty

When the problems of daily life is more and more difficult to solve, another life become to spread on the internet. The young people have a monopoly over the new technologies, and the older modes of communication, interaction and observation have been subverted. The new generation feels free to do as they please on the Internet, and feels a sense of superiority over their senior in this arena. The cyberspace is an infinite universe of data, messages and communities. People are engaged in varying degrees of interaction with close friends and strangers, and in turn, involvement with their lives. The Internet fuses reality with illusion, making life and thinking more "fragmented", "personalized" but also then "de-personalized". This has changed the concerns of the youths, as well as their communication channels among the public and with the society. The internet not only provides infinite amount of messages, which drives the individuals into fragmentation of lives. What's more crucial is that the way of reflection on and dealing with the messages has put people into a "perception kidnapping". The reception of and response to these messages happens at an alarming pace online. To a large extent, it replaces many traditional media including art, and the impact of the search

for individuality by contemporary art. The new social media and its web sites have brought vast new kinds of social connection, affecting autonomous individuals. Although the Internet life provides the illusion of infinite possibility, or the possibilities to turn to others' approval for self-respect, it doesn't make these young people to liberate themselves, to achieve the true autonomy of existence and its glory. On the contrary, this freedom fuels their unrest and confinement, which are only overcome when their "glamorous selves" are recognized by others, or when they make themselves dependent on prestigious and powerful personalities. This phenomenon may cause significant impact on the society. The relationship between "Self-Media" and contemporary art of the youth is one of the subjects of our curatorial research.

China has entered an era of accelerating experimentation, which leads us through the unknown process of modernization and the mystery of expansive changes. In this constantly evolving era, everything is complicated and many boundaries are blurred. The intrinsic desires of human, the interactions between people, and the function of power including the ambivalent relationship with money cannot be clearly recognized or defined. This is particularly true for youths who have just voyaged into society, as drifters in an ambiguous space. Their creations have no set boundaries or ends, and they represent a state of "Shallow Life". Art is born out of their self-oppression or loss of self-control. It touches on an emotional or psychological reality, like a nod of respect at one's solitude. Perhaps they are hoping to find undefined directions in such "uncertainty", rather than "certainty of meaning" which previous generations of artists valued in their artworks.

Alienation and Marginalization

At the turn or the end of every era, there are spirits of existence, who live in marginalized spaces between self-understanding and confusion. They are awkward yet uncompromising youths, who create artworks that denote similar states of mind and varied representations of existence. In art or in life, these young people function in a state of alienation, and they experiment with art through trial and imagination. They start from the margin to voyage into another margin; they question and subvert conventional views. Marginalization is the Other; it is an unrecognition. Marginalization is divergence, as it is the manifestation of multiplicity. Therefore, cheapness, coarseness, affectation, exaggeration and multiplicity come together in one equation, creating works resembling "Les Fleurs du mal". These creations are like viewers who look at you with a sense of tragic fate, who scatter beauty and romance in a dark and mysterious space that surprises and moves us. Perhaps their ultimate charm in art lies in the state of indecision, in the bold release of one's obsession with sensual stimulus, in the alternative and frantic freedom that shines through the chaos of reality. No matter what changed in the reality, the art keeps going on. The marginalized art is also a reflection of reality. It is searching for expressions of the self in various cultural channels, in order to accept and conform to visual reality, and the vocabulary of self-expression.

Conclusion

We may ask: what kind of society has triggered the choices of values, creative philosophies and aesthetics of these artists? In a society that embodies such inner vitality, impetus, desire and an experimental space where all forms are possible, we believed this is a shared space of cohesion and artistic creation. However, as we reviewed the works of these nominated artists, we saw many "unknowns" that cannot be categorized, and artworks that break the boundaries of their forms. This gives us an opening into the new philosophy that Chinese art will bring to the world's art scene. One note to ponder, however, is that most of the works fall short on being original and pioneering artistic creations. This has stimulated our thinking on the pros and cons of the expansive Western civilization, our unique history, education and the use of existing resources; what are the unique elements of our society which can contribute to the building of our future culture, both as China and as a global power? In view of these profound challenges, we hope that these young artists' creations will not only reveal their circuitous relationships with history and their sensitivity toward the present; they should also suggest a possible future -- or futures -- and inspire a deeper understanding of how young artists conceive of and trace the "happenings of the present". As there lies a profound cultural background behind these phenomena, art can enhance their primal state through "evolution", presenting a true elevation of self through the visual arts of contemporary China. A healthy art ecology consists of mutual comparison and reflection by rich "art species". All the "art species" grow up in the relation of mutual reinforcement and neutralizing. In order to adapt to environmental changes, new species and energy generate with the help and contribution by other species and different parts of the ecology. The sub-phenomena of art ecology are always created by the species that are most sensitive to the environmental changes and most easily ignored. They exist in the area between other matured species and create their own "Butterfly Effect" in the whole art ecology.

18 July, 2012