

高氏兄弟

1985-2005

Gao Brothers

高氏兄弟

的作品，在其文化针对性和具体的题材上，可以明确地指认为是中国的一种“都市艺术”，即以都市的生存状态和价值取向为背景，以行为、摄影等多媒介的方式对中国现代都市的巨变，以及产生种种问题的诉求为归宿。在这里，他们更为关注的不是现代化都市带给人们的诸多实惠，而是直接面对 90 年代以来中国都市化的现实与虚妄，并发出一个具有批判姿态的艺术家们的声音。或者说高氏兄弟的“行为”所塑造的形象，挪用、拼贴和建构的摄影作品，也正是由中国目前特殊的历史处境决定的。高氏兄弟的作品有一种是真实地记载自身的生活过程和原生形态，强调发现真实的记录。还有一种是从日常生活的参照中提示出来的，采用摆拍的虚构手段与策略达到的真实，即重新建构现实和用虚构补充现实，强调以创作主体的角度来表现、阐释隐蔽的真实，即把不同的众生相转化成纯粹的视觉形式感，并将这种形式感发挥到令人炫目、惊悚的程度，从而强化他们对其的思考、判断与批判。

西班牙《MATADOR》大型摄影杂志 2005/11、冯博一《觉醒的都市艺术——关于高氏兄弟的摄影艺术》

20 世纪 90 年代中国现代艺术的特点是大众文化与文化批判的结合，然而高氏兄弟的艺术却指示了另一种可能——纯粹的精神批判。他们从现实的精神危机中出发，引申到人类的精神状况，实现了物质与精神的双重批判，反映了在后现代主义条件下，对理想主义的失落和文化庸俗化的焦虑。在 1989 年“现代艺术大展”上，他们展出的“充气主义”装置作品那种具有挑衅性的文化批判与调侃使很多人感到震惊。进入 90 年代以后，从他们创作的《复印机艺术》与《临界·大十字架》两大系列来看，他们保留了“充气主义”的热情，在精神指向上多了一层现实的观照，而在物质层面上则继承了现代主义形式创造的传统，以两面出击的态势重塑了中国前卫艺术的形象。

《当代艺术》第 12 期 “高氏兄弟专辑”，湖南美术出版社 1996、易英《文本解构与倾斜的十字架》

经过将近二十年的艺术创作，高氏兄弟实践着一个从坐而论起到而行的自为历程。从架上艺术出走，再从装置艺术走向地景和影像的广阔表达领域。在渐变和突变的交替演进中，他们借由行为艺术面向存在开放的形式功能，剑及履及，走进社群和公共空间，直至底层。只有在民间和底层，人文艺术才真正具有救赎行动与批判意识的双重制高点。在过去的几年，他们以行为作品《拥抱》为意识的剧场发起“世界拥抱日”活动，呼喚已经被全权意识形态抽干了内涵和意义的普世价值。借助拥抱，恢复爱、友谊、团聚、同情心、谦卑、宽恕等上帝赋予人类的高贵品质，国界内外的许多参与者在拥抱中体验到爱与救赎的真实力量，许多年轻人因此而建立起新的生活信念。这个“旷野的呼喚”几乎耗尽了他们的全部精力，而在同时，他们以“拥抱”滋养了自身的诚实和恒久的信仰根苗。在我这样一个信主之人看来，这种富于前瞻性和使徒般的作为，无异于为个人灵命成长和全地失丧的灵魂而做出的守夜祷告。

“世纪在线中国艺术网”，岛子《为教鞭的审判准备今日的证词》

自 80 年代以来，高氏兄弟一直不妥协地从事前卫艺术的实验。他们于 1989 年在中国美术馆参加“中国现代艺术大展”，其大型装置作品《子夜的弥撒》，就颇吸引人。这件巨大的作品是一种“性”的视觉象征，但它转喻了他们在艺术理念上冲破束缚和藩篱之后的“自由”表现。这个时期，艺术家热衷于挪用现代主义的艺术，以此挣脱“文革”禁锢。尽管如此，中国现代艺术家仍延续英雄主义和集体主义的精神——灵魂的宏大叙事。之后，高氏兄弟沿用宗教化的宏大叙事，如他们的装置作品“十字架系列”，无不折射出在精神失落之后艺术家对道德理想的诉求。高氏兄弟之所以选择摄影进行创作，在于他们视摄影为一种认识和理解世界的语言工具。所以，他们也较倾向于黑姆特·哲施姆（Helmut Gernsheim）的观点，“在世界范围内，摄影仅是被理解的‘语言’，并且联系了整个民族与文化，它连接着人类的家庭，不受政治影响支配——人类是自由的，它如实地折射了生活和事件。让我们分享希望与绝望，并阐明了政治和社会的状态。我们成为人性和非人性的目击者……”

黄笃《解构之镜——高氏兄弟艺术中的“仿真”与“直接”》

高氏兄弟最大的智慧就是反时尚。1989 年现代艺术大展，《子夜的弥撒》以极荒诞、戏谑化的形式与理性和宏大主题相悖。90 年代，《临界·大十字架》以宏奢侈大的叙事主题与“玩世泼皮”相悖。世纪之交，又以极端人性化的《拥抱》行为与血腥暴力相左。

《中国当代艺术 100 位最具影响的艺术家肖像》，高名源主编，湖北美术出版社 2005

显然，高氏兄弟的艺术个性不同于徐冰、蔡国强、黄永 等依靠其艺术与中国传统文化的特有联系在国际艺坛走红中国艺术家。从一开始，高氏兄弟就走了一条与众不同的艺术之路。从 1989 年的“充气装置”、“复印机艺术”到 90 年代中期的《大十字架系列》，到他们后来的行为艺术《拥抱》系列，高氏兄弟一直试图把他们的艺术创作置于一个越来越开阔、澄明的人类主义的背景之中。

《成言艺术》，2005、苏珊·崔维丝《1989 年以来高氏兄弟的艺术演变》

高氏兄弟的艺术具有一种知识分子性和灵感的自我关注精神，这种倾向使他们在 90 年代走过了一条比较孤独而特立独行的道路。他们的艺术在整个 90 年代也广泛地涉猎和表现了前卫艺术的各种形式，包括装置艺术、行为艺术、观念艺术等各种媒介的艺术实验。他们的真正登场是在 80 年代末的 1989 年“现代艺术大展”，他们在美术馆吹起了很多力比多象征，用于对抗当时的主流意识形态。从 80 年代末到现在，他们好像一直走在时代的边缘，但是一个基本的主线一直没有变化，即对于彼岸性、知识分子的批判性、灵魂的自我关注以及艺术实验的追求。《永不完工的大厦》（2001—2005）和《黑色空间》（2005）可以说是他们近年来创作的反映这条主线的代表作系列，也是高氏兄弟的代表作。《永不完工的大厦》这个系列将“烂尾楼”变成了一个影像意义的空间文本，举重若轻地表达了这个时代一种在劫难逃的社会总体性。这种总体性无论是其自身还是受其影响的每个阶层的个人，都充满着矛盾和悖论。其总体特征表现为，这个时代的经济进步既充满了资本主义的竞争力量，满足了民族主义期待的历史情感以及人性的物质欲望，同时，也造就了一种史无前例的集体虚无感和灵魂的迷失。《永不完工的大厦》系列在人的存在状态和社会总体性的表达上近乎一种完美的结构性……

《中鸿信 2005 春季艺术品拍卖》，朱其《走在边缘的一对使徒——关于高氏兄弟的艺术》

Gao Brothers'

work can be categorically classified as a type of urban art framed within the context and value system of today's Chinese cities. Through their actions and photography, the Gao Brothers aim to explore the gigantic changes that their country's largest cities are undergoing, as well as the numerous problems that are being created. Far from emphasising the abundant material advantages offered by the modern city, the Gaos address the grave problems caused over the last 15 years by China's runaway process of urbanisation, and do so from a clearly critical perspective. In other words, the figures participating in their performances and photographs, made from copies, collages and montages, are conditioned by the peculiar historical context of modern China. Works by the Gao Brothers include portraits of their own life journey, of how they are today and how they used to be; in their own way, they also reflect the reality surrounding them, starting from reality itself and adding prepared or fictitious images to reach the world they want to show. Their works describe the other reality they have created. They transform portraits of people into a purely visual sensation and give free rein to this formal sensation until leaving the spectator in a dizzy and disturbed state.

MAYADOR 2005/11, Feng Bo, 'Disillusioned Urban Art: On Gao Brothers' Photography'

The hallmark of Chinese contemporary arts during the 1990s was the synthesis of popular culture and cultural criticism. However, the Gao Brothers' art hinted at another possibility – a purely spiritual criticism. They use the individual's spiritual crises as a launching point and extend it to humanity's spiritual condition, thus realizing two-fold criticism of both the material and spiritual worlds, also reflecting the postmodern world's anxiety and worry over the losses and cultural vulgarities that stem from idealism. At the 1989 Modern Art Exhibition at the National Museum of Art their provocative 'Inflationism' installation shocked a great many people, simultaneously criticizing and ridiculing culture. After transitioning to the 90s, and judging from works such as *Copy Machine Art* and *Crisis: The Great Crucifix*, they maintained their 'Inflationism' zeal and added a new spiritual dimension to art observation; on a material level they raised the bar for modern creation and reinterpretation of traditional thought. With their two-fold aggressive stance they synthesized a new form for the Chinese Avant-garde.

Contemporary Art No. 12, The Gao Brothers Special Edition, 1996, Human Fine Arts Press; Yi Ying, 'Deconstructing Texts and the Learning Crucifix'

Through nearly 20 years of artistic creation the Gao Brothers are implementing a self-determined course of action ranging from passive discussion to a call to action. Breaking free from mere tabletop, dust collecting art – and then once again from traditional installation art – the Gaos employ a full spectrum of recording arts and environmental stimuli to define their realm. In the gradual process of their sometimes sudden, other times gradual interchanges they use the pretext of 'performance art' and other open-minded pretenses to infiltrate public space and society at large, right down to the lowest levels. For it is only at the lowest, layman levels of society that art can realize its highest two-fold purpose of upholding redemption and salvation while consciously playing the social critic. In the past few years, their live 'Embrace' performances inspired 'International Hug Day', and appealed to our conscious state which was already looking for latent and meaningful value. Through 'Embrace' they recovered the love, friendship, sense of belonging, sympathy, modesty, tolerance and other precious qualities that the creator endowed to mankind; 'Embrace' participants the world over learned the true power of love and redemption, and many young people were inspired to establish new lifestyles. This 'call of the wild' effectively exhausted the Gao Brothers' strength, but at the same time, 'Embrace' fostered for them a sense of self-trust and the everlasting roots of faith. In the eyes of someone who puts their faith in systems, this kind of forward-thinking, cult inspiring activity nurtures the growth and development of individuals' spiritual life and thereby the bereaved soul of the entire world, making for a prayerful night's vigil.

www.CI2000.com, 2005, Duzei, 'Preparing Today's Testimony for Redemptive Trial'

Since the 1980's, the Gao Brothers have uncompromisingly committed themselves to avant-garde art experimentation. Their large installation *Midnight Mass* attracted much attention in the China Avant-Garde Exhibition of 1989 at the China National Art Museum. This gargantuan work, which sat just inside the entrance of the National Art Museum, was perceived by many as a symbol of sexuality. Actually, it was more closely akin to an abstract expression of newfound freedom, enjoyed by many artists of the time, after having broken free of the shackles and stereotypes of prior artistic theories. During this period Chinese contemporary artists enthusiastically applied modernist techniques as tools to break down the constraints of the Cultural Revolution. Contemporary Chinese artists today continue in this spirit of heroism and collectivism as reflected in grandiose – and often idealistic – visual narratives. The Gao Brothers continue to employ such visual narratives often with religious themes, which reflect an artistic pursuit of moral ideals after the experience of loss of spirituality. An example of this orientation can be seen in their installation work *The Great Crucifix Series*. The Gao Brothers rationale for choosing photography as a tool of artistic creation is a result of the special affinity they feel for it. In the view of Helmut Gensheim, 'Photography is the only language understood in all parts of the world, and bridging all nations and cultures, it links the family of man. Independent of political influence where people are free it reflects truthfully life and events, allows us to share in the hopes and despair of others, and illuminates political and social conditions. We become the eye-witnesses of the humanity and inhumanity of mankind...'

Huang Du, 'A Deconstructed Reflection: Simulation and Substitution in the Gao Brothers' Art'

The most original and interesting aspect of the Gao Brothers is that they do not feel obliged to follow fashionable or popular artistic trends. Their wisdom has always been to follow their own artistic instinct and inspiration. At the Great Exhibition of Modern Art in 1989, *Midnight Mass* appeared with its extreme absurdity and banter and stood out in complete contrast to the rationalist and grandiose themes of the time. In the 90s, *Crisis: The Great Crucifix* went against the aggressive trend of 'cynical realism' which evolved into the early years of 2000. Now, at the beginning of the new century, the Gao Brothers have once again betrayed common violence and given us a gift full of humanity: *Embrace*.

The Portraits of 100 Most Influential Artists in Chinese Contemporary Art, Published by Hubei Fine Arts Press, 2005, Gao Minchun

It is clear that the Gao Brothers' artistic nature differs from those of other Chinese artists such as Xu Bing, Cai Guoqiang and Huang Yongping, who are popular in the international art world because of the special relationship with Chinese traditional culture in the latter artists' art. From the beginning, the Gao Brothers have travelled down a unique path of artistic creation. From their 1989 'Inflationism' Installation and 'Copy Machine Art' to their *Great Crucifix* installation series and *Hugging* performance series in the 90s, the Gao Brothers have been trying to give their artworks a context that is wider and brighter in scope, and also more humanistic.

Beeward Art, 2005, Susan Davis, 'The Evolution of the Gao Brothers' Art Since 1989.'

The Gao Brothers' art possesses an intellectual and spiritual attention to the soul. This tendency caused them to travel a rather lonely and unique road during the 1990s. Their art expanded throughout the 1990s to express avant-garde art in many forms, including installation art, performance art, conceptual art, and various forms of experimentation with video and media art. Their emergence on the public stage occurred at the modern art exhibition of 1989 where they inflated many symbols of libido to resist the mainstream ideology of the time. From the late 1980s to today, they seem to have been traveling on the margins of their era. Yet a basic thread remains unchanged, namely, their focus on the other, their intellectual criticism, their attention to the soul, and their artistic experimentation. *The Forever Unfinished Building* (2001-2005) and *Black Space* (2005) express this thread. In *The Forever Unfinished Building* they use the 'half finished building' as a spatial text which expresses the manic collective utopian sensibility of the era. Whether expressing a social collective or a specific social class, each work expresses contradictions and paradoxes. Collectively this work expresses the idea that this era's economic progress is full of competitive spirit from capitalism, and full of nationalist lyricism, and full of material desire; at the same time it also expresses a collective spiritual vacuum. *The Forever Unfinished Building* is a nearly perfect form for expressing the individual's existential situation within society's collectivism, especially by using the motif of the 'half finished building'.

The Catalog of the Art Auction of Zhong Heng Xin in Spring 2005, Zhu Qiu, 'A Pair of Disciples on the Margins: on the Art of the Gao Brothers'

高氏兄弟

Gao Brothers

1985-2005



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The Gao Brothers Studio is located in the main street in the
Factory 798 Dashi Art District. (sculpture by Liu Bolin)

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高氏兄弟肖像
Portrait of Gao Brothers

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评论 Criticism



4. 拥抱二十分钟的乌托邦 (之一)

2000
行为照片
120x100cm

The Utopia of 20 Minutes

Embrace No. 1

2000
Photograph of performance
120x100cm



高名潞 艺术批评家、哈佛大学博士

高氏兄弟最大的智慧就是反时尚。1989年现代艺术大展,《子夜的弥撒》以极荒诞、戏谑化的形式与理性和宏大主题相悖;90年代,《临界·大十字架》以宏大的叙事主题与“玩世泼皮”相悖;世纪之交,又以极端人性化的《拥抱》行为与血腥暴力相左。

《中国当代艺术100位最具影响的艺术家肖像》,高名潞主编,湖北美术出版社 2005

Gao Minglu Art critic, Doctor of Harvard University

The most original and interesting aspect of the Gao Brothers is that they do not feel obliged to follow fashionable or popular artistic trends. Their wisdom has always been to follow their own artistic instinct and inspiration. At the Great Exhibition of Modern Art in 1989, *Midnight Mass* appeared with its extreme absurdity and banter and stood out in complete contrast to the rationalist and grandiose themes of the time. In the 90s, *Crisis: the Great Crucifix* went against the aggressive trend of 'cynical realism' which evolved into the early years of 2000. Now, at the beginning of the new century, the Gao Brothers have once again betrayed common violence and given us a gift full of humanity: *Embrace*.

The Portraits of 100 Most Influential Artists in Chinese Contemporary Art, Published by Hubei Fine Arts Press, 2005, Gao Minglu

5. 《拥抱!拥抱!》在北京大山子艺术区
时空空间的展出场景
2005

Installation View of Hug!Hug!
798 Dashanzi Art District
2005



岛子 艺术批评家、清华大学教授

经过将近二十年的艺术创作，高氏兄弟实践着一个从坐而论到起而行的自为历程。从架上艺术出走，再从装置艺术走向地景和影像的广阔表达领域。在渐变和突变的交替演进中，他们借由行为艺术面向存在开放的形式功能，剑及履及，走进社群和公共空间，直至底层。只有在民间和底层，人文艺术才真正秉有救赎行动与批判意识的双重制高点。在过去的几年，他们以行为作品《拥抱》为意识的剧场发起“世界拥抱日”活动，呼唤已经被全权意识形态抽干了内涵和意义的普世价值。借助拥抱，恢复爱、友谊、团聚、同情心、谦卑、宽恕等上帝赋予人类的高贵品质，国界内外的许多参与者在拥抱中体验到爱与救赎的真实力量，许多年轻人因此而建立起新的生活信念。这个“旷野的呼唤”几乎耗尽了他们的全部精力，而在同时，他们以“拥抱”滋养了自身的诚心和恒久的信仰根苗。在我这样一个信主之人看来，这种富于前瞻性和使徒感的作为，无异于为个人灵命成长和全地失丧的灵魂而做出的守夜祷告。

摘自“世纪在线中国艺术网”，岛子《为救赎的审判准备今日的证词》

Dao Zi Art critic, Professor of Tsinghua University

Through nearly 20 years of artistic creation, the Gao Brothers are implementing a self-determined course of action, ranging from passive discussion to a call to action. Breaking free from mere tabletop, dust collecting art - and then once again from traditional installation art - the Gaos employ a full spectrum of recording arts and environmental stimuli to define their realm. In the gradual process of their sometimes sudden, other times gradual interchanges, they use the pretext of 'performance art' and other open-minded pretenses to infiltrate public space and society at large, right down to the lowest levels. For it is only at the lowest, layman levels of society that art can realize its highest two-fold purpose of upholding redemption and salvation while consciously playing the social critic. In the past few years, their live *Embrace* performances inspired 'International Hug Day,' and appealed to our conscious state which was already looking for latent and meaningful value.

Through *Embrace* they recovered the love, friendship, sense of belonging, sympathy, modesty, tolerance and other precious qualities that the creator endowed to mankind; *Embrace* participants the world over learned the true power of love and redemption, and many young people were inspired to establish new lifestyles. This 'call of the wild' effectively exhausted the Gao Brothers' strength, but at the same time, *Embrace* fostered for them a sense of self-trust and the everlasting roots of faith. In the eyes of someone who puts their faith in systems, this kind of forward-thinking, cult-inspiring activity nurtures the growth and development of individuals' spiritual life and thereby the bereaved soul of the entire world, making for a prayerful night's vigil.

w w w.c12000.com, 2005, Daozi, 'Preparing Today's Testimony for Redemptive Trial'



6. 记忆

1999

油画

84.5x80.5cm

Memory

1999

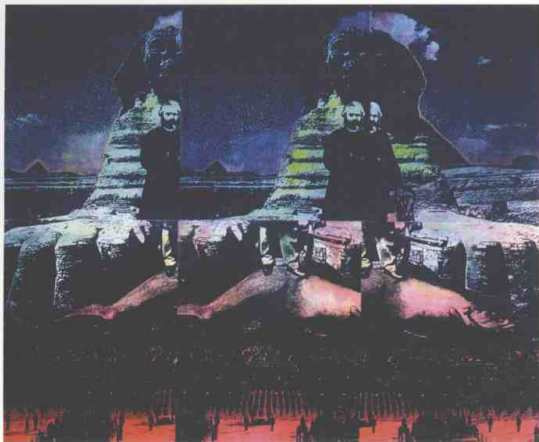
Oil on canvas

84.5x80.5cm



7. 神殿 1985 剪纸

Temple 1985 Paper-cut



8. 红色文明史

1992

宣纸、复印、水粉色

The History of Red

1992

Water colour on photocopied rice paper

易英 艺术批评家、《世界美术》副主编

20 世纪 90 年代中国现代艺术的特点是大众文化与文化批判的结合，然而高氏兄弟的艺术却指示了另一种可能——纯粹的精神批判。他们从现实的精神危机中出发，引申到人类的精神状况，实现了物质与精神的双重批判，反映了在后现代主义条件下，对理想主义的失落和文化庸俗化的焦虑。在 1989 年“现代艺术大展”上，他们展出的“充气主义”装置作品那种具有挑衅性的文化批判与调侃使很多人感到震惊。进入 90 年代以后，从他们创作的《复印机艺术》与《临界·大十字架》两大系列来看，他们保留了“充气主义”的热情，在精神指向上多了一层现实的观照，而在物质层面上则继承了现代主义形式创造的传统，以两面出击的态势重塑了中国前卫艺术的形象。

《当代艺术》第 12 期“高氏兄弟专辑”，湖南美术出版社 1996。 易英《文本解构与倾斜的十字架》

Yi Ying Art Critic, Editor-in-Chief of World Art Magazine

The hallmark of Chinese contemporary arts during the 1990s was the synthesis of popular culture and cultural criticism. However, the Gao Brothers' art hinted at another possibility – a purely spiritual criticism. They use the individual's spiritual crises as a launching point and extend it to humanity's spiritual condition, thus realizing two-fold criticism of both the material and spiritual world, also reflecting the postmodern world's anxiety and worry over the losses and cultural vulgarities that stem from idealism. At the 1989 Modern Art Exhibition at the National Museum of Art their provocative 'Inflationism' installation shocked a great many people, simultaneously criticizing and ridiculing culture. After transitioning to the 90s, and judging from works such as *Copy Machine Art* and *Crisis: The Great Crucifix*, they maintained their 'Inflationist' zeal and added a new spiritual dimension to art observation; on a material level they raised the bar for modern creation and reinterpretation of traditional thought. With their two-fold aggressive stance, they synthesized a new form for Chinese Avant-garde.

Contemporary Art No. 12, The Gao Brothers Special Edition, 1996, Hunan Fine Arts Press, Yi Ying, 'Deconstructing Texts and the Leaning Crucifix'