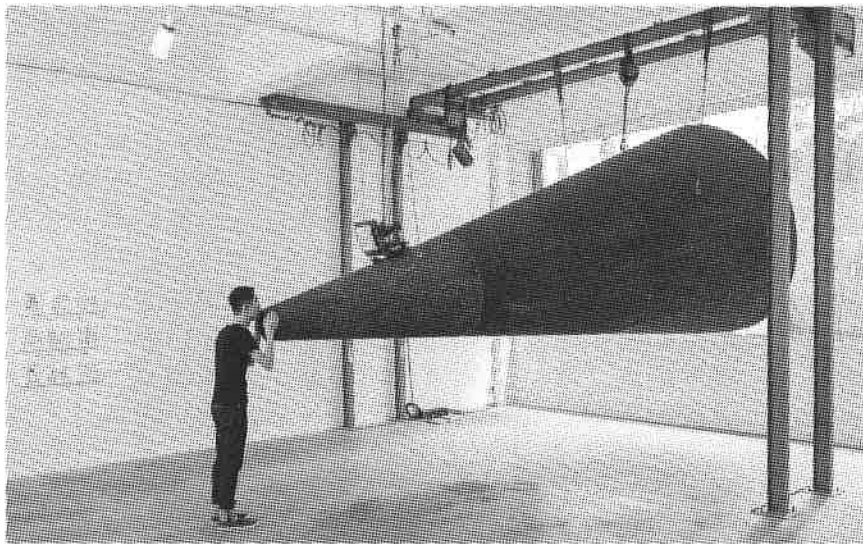


镶嵌于社会之中的“新公共艺术”

——郑波小记，文/廖薇

Embedded in Society's "New Public Art": Notes on Zheng Bo, by Ella Liao



郑波，《安贝德卡尔——为她而歌》，汉雅轩展览现场，2013 / Zheng Bo, "Sing For Her", installation view at Hanart Square, 2013

Zheng Bo is not a prolific artist. He maintains a certain distance from artistic circles, yet he has studied and practiced socially engaged art for over a decade. When conversing with Zheng Bo, it is very difficult to draw any assumptions about his background based on his accent, behavior, or mindset; it is as if there are too many clues.

Zheng Bo was born in 1974, and grew up in Beijing. After graduating from high school, he was meant to study physics at Peking University, but following a year of military training, he instead went to study abroad in the USA, majoring in computer science and art. After graduating in 1999, he went to Hong Kong and worked as a consultant until he tired of his job four years later, and resigned to study art at the Chinese University of Hong Kong as a graduate student. After receiving his master's degree in 2006, he went on to do his PhD

in visual culture studies at the University of Rochester in the USA under the tutelage of Douglas Crimp. After that, he went on to teach socially engaged art at the China Academy of Fine Arts and the City University of Hong Kong.

Zheng has thus spent most of his adult life in the USA and Hong Kong; but he remains a Mainlander at heart, because his early years were spent within China's high-pressure, mechanized, anti-individualistic education system. He also received a year of military training prior to entering a university. The artist has an intimate understanding of what it takes to construct an "outstanding, proper, and standard" member of the Chinese elite. Considering his later experience studying liberal academic milieus in the USA and Hong Kong, where the social environments are more tolerant and equal, it should come as no surprise that comparisons between these two

郑波不是一个多产的艺术家的，他甚至和艺术圈有一些距离，不过他对社会参与式艺术 (socially engaged art) 的研究和实践已经展开了十多年。与郑波交谈，很难从他的口音、举止或思维方式中判断他的背景，似乎线索太多。

郑波出生于1974年，成长于北京，高中毕业后本来要去北大读物理，但在军训了一年后，改道去了美国读大学，主修计算机科学和艺术两个专业。1999年大学毕业后，他前往香港发展，在咨询公司为企业做咨询项目，直到四年后，他厌倦了这份工作，辞职去香港中文大学读艺术创作的研究生。在2006年获得硕士学位后，他又继续前往美国罗切斯特大学攻读视觉文化研究的博士课程，师从道格拉斯·克林普 (Douglas Crimp)。毕业后他先后在中国美院和香港城市大学授课，从事社会参与式艺术的教学工作。

从郑波的经历来看，他成年后的大部分时间都在美国和中国香港度过，但他又是个地地道道的内地人，接受过高压、机械化、去个性化的体制内教育，又经历了长达一

sociopolitical climates are common motifs in his art.

In 2004, not long after he began studying at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Zheng made a video work entitled "Welcome to Hong Kong". At the time, Hong Kong had recently opened up to tourists from the Mainland. The video introduced some of Hong Kong's main attractions in the form of a guided tour—but two different versions of the narration were used. One version toed the official CCTV party line, lauding the "One country, two systems" policy while preaching prosperity and stability. The other version introduced the actual political and economic situation in Hong Kong following its return to China, and expressed the worries that citizens held for Hong Kong's future.

Nowadays, this piece seems overly simplistic and superficial in terms of completeness, but it clearly indicates Zheng Bo's interest in and sensitivity to politics and society at a time when he first began experimenting with art. This beginning was also influenced by contemporary art local to Hong Kong, and Hong Kong's social environment. Zheng Bo was already very familiar with the PRC's political propaganda, but the many years he spent in Hong Kong surely influenced him to a degree where listening to typical Party rhetoric would have been somewhat embarrassing for him. Hong Kong society takes pride in the freedom of speech and thought; when such propagandist rhetoric crosses over from the Mainland, its effect is tone deaf—intolerable. Zheng Bo's work expresses the same anxiety felt by many Hong Kong artists at the time, an anxiety shared by young Hong

年的大学入学军训，清楚了解塑造一个“优秀、正确、规范”的中国式精英的全部过程。相比后来他到美国和中国香港对宽容平等的社会环境、自由开放的学院氛围的切身体会，他作品中经常出现对两种社会政治的比较就显得合情合理了。

2004年，在他进入香港中文大学不久就做了一部题为《欢迎光临香港》(Welcome to Hong Kong)的录像作品。当时香港刚刚向内地游客开放自由行，录像借着旅游指南的形式向自由行旅客介绍香港岛的几大景点，但旁白同时出现了两个版本：一个是典型的CCTV式中国官方风格言论，歌颂一国两制，鼓吹繁荣稳定；另一版本则介绍了香港自回归以来所面临的实际政治和经济局面，表达了香港市民对香港未来的担忧。现在看来，这件作品在完成度上有些过于简单和表面化，但当时刚刚开始涉足当代艺术的郑波已经通过这件作品表现出了对社会政治的兴趣和敏感。这个开端也是受了香港社会和本土当代艺术的影响。如上文所说，郑波对内地那套政治宣传本应习以为常，但多年在香港的生活一定令他在听到中国特色的官方论调时感到尴尬；言论和思想自由是香港社会引以为豪的特点，跨越了那条边境线，再说这样的话就是格格不入、无法容忍的。郑波的作品和当时许多香港艺术家一样表达了共同的焦虑，本地年轻人也意识到这种潜移默化的同化，担心文明的倒退，只不过这种焦虑来自诞生于两种政治环境下的个体的自觉。

2013年，郑波做了另一件颇具幽默感的作品《师华步》(Walk like Chinese)，内容是传授如何像中国人那样走路的六段视频。郑波在作品陈述中写道，“在我遗忘如何像个中国人那样走路之前，为你，也为我自己制作了这些教学视频”。跟随大街上行走的路人，用iPhone手机随机记录了几种典型的中国式行走：“熊步”“叼烟”“遮阳”“勾肩”“聊天”“溜达”……，作品第二部分以视频为教材，在萨尔斯堡组织奥地利人学习中国人的走路方式，有趣的是，当这些外国人按照

视频所示方式走路，从背后看就像一群真正的中国人。与《欢迎光临香港》相比，这一次郑波不再剑拔弩张，而是在嬉笑怒骂间表达了忧虑。也因他多年穿梭于中国内地、美国和中国香港之间，令他得以从一定的距离反观中国人的行为方式，从中隐约发现许多共同的国民性。他更清楚地意识到：整个社会最终是由无数单独的个体组成，正是这些个体的趣味、品格、价值观和意识形态在决定整个社会的走向。

郑波始终是有一份职业的，学生、职员、教师，他并不像个典型的艺术家那样，游离于社会，只要愿意可以长时间闭门独处；或有所谓的艺术家圈子，里面有各种纷扰，既有对艺术的争论，也存在彼此间微妙的竞争。选择一种远离商业市场，既孤独又极具社会性的艺术实践，与郑波的个人经历和长期的学院背景相符。无论美国或是中国香港，郑波都属于当地社会中的少数族裔，这也解释了为什么他的社会参与式艺术经常和少数民族的社团合作，“社群”“阶层”和“公共体”的概念是贯穿其创作始终的核心。

在2004年和2013年，他曾先后两次与香港的菲律宾社群合作，创作了《开心乐园餐》(Happy Meal)和《为伊唱》(Sing for Her)两件作品。在《开心乐园餐》中，他邀请五位菲律宾和印尼籍女佣讲一个笑话，令她们的雇主了解她们在家务之外的才能；在《为伊唱》中，他与菲佣团体合作录制了上世纪三四十年代一首暗含了实现国家独立愿望的菲律宾流行歌曲《光之歌》，通过对这首歌的重新传唱，让人们关注在港菲籍人士的劳工权益和政治诉求，也让这一社会阶层在经济和政治层面以外，极为少见地从艺术和文化视角成为叙述对象。

郑波把他长年研究和实践的各种社会参与式艺术概括为“新公共艺术”(new public art)，这种实践和生活密不可分，关注并积极参与公共议题；在这类艺术中，作品以一种群体参与、介入和互动的形式表现，而非纯粹个体的表达，艺术家退居为“发起者”和“组织者”，与观

Kongers who were also aware of the PRC's subtle message of assimilation, and feared socio-political regression. However, Zheng Bo's anxiety was a result of his identity as an individual inhabiting two different political environments.

In 2013, Zheng created a humorous piece entitled "Walk Like Chinese" comprising six videos teaching viewers how to walk like a Chinese person. In the artist's statement, he wrote, "Before I forget how to walk like a Chinese person, I have created these educational videos for you and also for myself." The artist follows pedestrians on the street in China, recording "classic" examples of Chinese-style locomotion with his iPhone. Each style is prefaced with a title, including "bear step", "dangling a cigarette", "sunshade", "hunched shoulders", "in conversation", and "a stroll". The second part of the piece uses the video as instructional



郑波,《住在上海的植物》,项目记录,2013 / Zheng Bo, "Plants Living in Shanghai", record from the project, 2013

material, and documents the process of teaching a group of Austrians in Salzburg how to walk like a Chinese person. Interestingly, when seen from behind, this group of foreigners that has learned how to walk like a Chinese person does indeed resemble a group of Chinese people. Compared with the coiled tension of "Welcome to Hong Kong", here Zheng



郑波,《师华步》,录像截屏,2013 / Zheng Bo, "Walk Like Chinese", video stills, 2013

embeds his unease within the ridicule and mockery of the videos. Due to his many years living between the Mainland, the USA, and Hong Kong, he has gained a certain perspective on the Chinese, obtaining a vague sense of their shared national characteristics. He has clearly come to the realization that society is made up of countless individuals, and that it is the sum of their individual interests, characters, values, and ideology which determines society's overall trajectory.

Ultimately, Zheng Bo is a professional student, staff member, and teacher. He does not detach himself from society in a manner typical of many artists; he cannot shut himself away for long periods of time on a whim, nor does he belong to a "community of artists" with various distractions ranging from debates about art to subtle competition between members. He has chosen to distance himself from the commercial market, and engages in an artistic practice corresponding to his personal experience and rich academic background—a practice that is at once solitary and extremely social. Whether

he is in the USA or in Hong Kong, Zheng Bo is always a minority in the society he inhabits, which also explains why he is drawn to minority communities in his social engagements and art. The concepts of "in groups," "class," and "community" lie at the core of his body of work.

Between 2004 and 2013, Zheng worked twice with the Filipino community in Hong Kong, creating "Happy Meal" and "Sing for Her". In "Happy Meal" he invited five Filipino and Indonesian women to tell jokes, to help their employers understand their talents outside of housework. In "Sing for Her", Zheng worked with a group of Filipinos to record them singing a popular Filipino song from the 1930s and 1940s which alludes to a desire for the Philippines to achieve national independence, entitled "O Ilaw". By singing this song, the artist helped bring attention to the labor rights of Filipinos working in Hong Kong as well as their political aspirations. The piece also gave this group of individuals, who are largely invisible outside Hong Kong's economic and political context, an opportunity to be the narrative object

in an artistic and cultural setting.

Zheng Bo has categorized the many kinds of socially engaged art he has been studying and practicing over the years as “new public art.” This type of practice is closely interlinked with life; it is concerned with and actively participates in public issues. For this kind of art, works are manifest as community participation, involvement, and interaction rather than a purely individual form of expression. The artist is relegated to the role of “initiator” and “organizer,” forming a partnership with the viewer while remaining obscured by the piece itself. It is also difficult to circulate this type of art on the art market because its appearance seldom takes into account aesthetic considerations—such pieces are not a form of “fine art.” For example, the main content of “Sing for Her” is impossible to present in a gallery setting; it becomes meaningful to the participant during a process of interaction. Critics of “new public art” often mention over-emphasis on political objectives, but Zheng Bo balances grand themes on the oft-ignored minutiae of culture in everyday life. He believes deeper political significance can often be gleaned from such details. Indeed, there are no ultimate solutions for political issues. If this type of art can raise public awareness and encourage more people to engage in social reform, then such sociality itself will possess an aesthetic significance that transcends form, while also distinguishing new public art from social movements, and life itself. This is similar to the long-term project related to “weeds” that Zheng has expanded to several cities since 2013. The project analyzes and narrates the origins

and characteristics of various wild plants in urban environments. By studying them as visual symbols and extending their meaning in the context of China’s process of modernization, the artist explores the relationship between plants and society and politics.

众建立伙伴的关系，隐藏于作品之后。这类作品也较难在艺术市场上流通，因为它们往往不过多考虑美学形式，它们不是“精致艺术”。例如，作品《为伊唱》的主要内容其实是无法通过展览呈现的，只在发生过程中通过互动被参与者获取而产生意义。关于对“新公共艺术”的批判，往往会提到它过于强调政治目的，郑波的方法是把宏大的主题落在平时容易被忽略的文化细节上，他认为细节往往牵连着更深层的政治。的确，在政治问题上没有一劳永逸的终极解决方法，如果这类艺术可以唤醒民众意识，可以参与到社会改良，这种社会性本身便具有超越形式感的美学意义，也使新公共艺术得以区别于社会运动和生活本身。就像郑波从2013年开始在一些城市展开的关于“野草”的长期项目，通过对城市中各种野生植物的来历、习性的剖析与叙事，进而考察它们在中国现代化进程中的视觉符号和引申意义，从中探索植物与社会政治的关联。

郑波自2014年创立了“A Wall” (awallproject.net)——一个记录和呈现新公共艺术项目的网络平台。该平台第一阶段收录了来自大陆、香港和台湾的六个新公共艺术项目。由于新公共艺术的属性，这些作品注定不会在画廊及博览会等艺术市场平台上流通，甚至也很难进入美术馆的收藏；所以迫切需要建立一个公共平台，对过去发生的或正在发生的新公共艺术项目进行收集、整理和研究。郑波把这一项目取名为“A Wall”，让这面在现实中无法实现的“墙”在网络世界里竖立起来；这些艺术家的新公共艺术作品成为“张贴”在墙上的言论。郑波希望这一项目可以长期维持下去，以公开的、非营利的在线数据库的形式，让新公共艺术进入更多观众和学者的视野，让它成为主流当代艺术的一种补充，独立于艺术生产和艺术消费的逻辑之外，不受制于权力和资本，却镶嵌在社会之中。

and characteristics of various wild plants in urban environments. By studying them as visual symbols and extending their meaning in the context of China’s process of modernization, the artist explores the relationship between plants and society and politics.

Since 2014, Zheng Bo has been running “A Wall” (awallproject.net)—a web platform for documenting and presenting new public art projects. The platform’s first stage encompassed six new public art projects from the Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. The nature of new public art means the medium is destined to be absent from circulation in art market platforms such as galleries or exhibitions; it is also difficult for new public art to enter museum collections. Thus, there is an urgent need to construct a public platform to collect, collate, and research new public art projects that have happened or are currently in progress.

Zheng Bo has named this project “A Wall”, constructing within the digital world a “wall” which could not exist in the material world, and “posting” these artists’ new public art projects on the wall. Zheng would like to see this project continue for the foreseeable future as a public, non-profit online database which helps expose more viewers and researchers to new public art. He envisions the project as a supplement to mainstream contemporary art, one which inhabits a space outside the logic of art production and consumption where the works will not be subject to power or capital, yet remain deeply embedded in society. ■ Translated by Fei Wu

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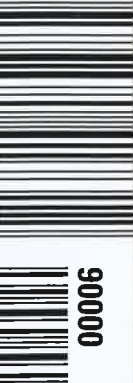
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