JYU DISSERTATIONS 473

Shuchen Wang

The Darker Side of Contemporary Art in China

Market, Politics, Gender

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For Lumi and those who accompanied us on our adventures in Beijing 2007–2012.

ABSTRACT

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Between the opening-up policy and the Belt and Road Initiative of Chinese Dream, the development of Chinese contemporary art crystallises the robust growth of the country from an agriculture-based society into the world's factory and a global powerhouse. During this period, the institutional voids and changing social paradigms from a planned economy to state capitalism has yielded opportunities for the 'darker side (of modernity)' and/or the 'dark (deep) world of fine art)' to take shape in China's emerging culture economics. From the global perspective of the entangled history in the Sinosphere, this research takes a postcolonialist approach based on the cultural criticism of Mignolo and the media theory of McLuhan to investigate the three key dimensions of art history – market, politics and gender (social relevance) – with five independent but mutually related sub-studies, focusing on (1) the actor-agent network of foreign (in)direct investments in the Chinese contemporary 'art game', (2) the process of valorisation – value proposition, value added and value chain – in the ecosystem of the art industry, (3) the relationship between systems of political economy and the use of (contemporary) art, (4) the colonial way of seeing the arts and culture of the Other, and (5) gender equality in the art history of modern China. The findings and results support the thesis that 'Chinese contemporary art is the medium is the message of coloniality', an argument that is also valid in regard to other non-Western traditions in Southeast Asia or the Middle East, facing the globalised market-oriented neoliberalism and neo-colonisation.

Keywords: Art Game, Chinese Contemporary Art, Art Economy, Cultural Policy, Modernity, Globalisation, Neoliberalism, Political Economy, Museum Phenomenology, (De)Coloniality, Foreign Investment, Value, Chinese Feminism

TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

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Kiinan avautumispolitiikan ja Kiinalaisen unelman "yksi vyöhyke, yksi tie" (Road and Belt Initiative) -aloitteen välillä kiinalainen nykytaide (CCA) on kiteyttänyt maan voimakkaan kasvun maatalousyhteiskunnasta maailman tehtaaksi ja globaaliksi voimalaitokseksi. Tänä aikana institutionaaliset tyhjät tilat ja yhteiskunnallisen paradigman muuttuminen suunnitelmataloudesta valtiojohtoiseen kapitalismiin antoivat mahdollisuuden (modernin ajan) "pimeän puolen" ja / tai "pimeän (syvän) (korkeataide-) maailman" muotoutumiseen Kiinan nousevassa kulttuuritaloudessa. Katsottaessa Sinosfäärin monimutkaista, yhteenkietoutunutta historiaa globaalista perpektiivistä, tämä tutkimus käyttää innovatiivista, Mignolon postkolonialistiseen kritiikkiin ja McLuhanin mediateoriaan perustuvaa lähestymistapaa, tutkii taidehistorian kolmea keskeistä osa-aluetta -, markkinoiden, politiikan ja sukupuolen (yhteiskunnallisesti merkityksellisen)- yhdessä viiden itsenäisellä mutta toisiinsa liittyvän alatutkimuksen kanssa, jotka keskittyvät (1) ulkomaisten toimijoiden verkoston (epä) suoriin sijoituksiin kiinalaiseen ´nykytaidepeliin´, (2) valorisaatioprosessiin - arvon määrittely, arvonlisäys ja arvoketju - taideteollisuuden ekosysteemissä, (3) talouspoliittisten järjestelmien ja (nyky)taiteen käytön välisiin suhteisiin, (4) kolonialistiseen tapaan nähdä Muiden taidetta ja kulttuuria (5) sukupuolten tasa-arvoon modernin Kiinan taidehistoriassa. Tutkimustulokset ja päätelmät tukevat väitettä että ´Kiinalainen nykytaide on kolonialistisen viestin välittäjä´- väite joka on pätee samalla tavoin muihin ei-länsimaisiin traditioihin, kuten Kaakkois-Aasiaan tai Lähi-itään, jotka kohtaavat globalisoituneen markkinasuuntautuneen uusliberalismin ja/tai uuskolonisaation.

Asiasanat: taidejärjestelmät, kiinalainen nykytaide, taidemarkkinat, kulttuuripolitiikka, moderniteetti, globalisaatio, uusliberalismi, talouspolitiikka, museofenomenologia, dekolonialisaatio, kansainvälinen investointi, arvo, kiinalainen feminismi

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A great learning process in achieving this article-based thesis was fulfilled thanks to those conferences' panel chairs, co-chairs and discussants and journal editors and anonymous reviewers that I have engaged with. Namely, the conferences are the 8th International Conference of Arts and Society, Budapest 2013; the 41st International Conference of Social Theory, Politics and the Arts (STP&A), Adelaide 2015; the 42nd Annual Conference of the Association of Art Historians (AAH), Edinburg 2016; the 34th World Congress of Commitée internationale d'histoire de l'art (CIHA) under the Conseil international de la philosophie et des sciences humaines (CIPSH) of UNESCO-UN, Beijing 2016; and the 106th Annual Conference of the College Art Association (CAA), Los Angeles 2018. The journals include *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*; *International Journal of Cultural Policy*; and *Critical Studies in Fashion and Beauty*. Without the insightful and constructive comments from these expert groups on the five sub-studies published as articles attached (see the List of Publications), this thesis would not have achieved its current form. Of course, there were some equally insightful but perhaps not-so-constructive comments from some editors and anonymous reviewers. To them, a detailed thank-you note may one day be written in a blog to offer tips on how to fail a journal paper, or a PhD for that matter.

A special thank you is owed to Professor Janne Vilkuna, who kindly received me years back at the University of Jyväskylä, before I went to work in the 798 Contemporary Art District in Beijing. Not to forget are also all my dear friends and colleagues in China during my work stay in the late 2000s and early 2010s. In retrospect, it was the high time when the Chinese contemporary art world was booming hard and wild and fun – an unforgettable experience of my life, and the beginning and end of this research journey. I as well have to thank Dr. Ling-Yun Tang, former lecturer at the University of Hong Kong and member of faculty at Sotheby's Institute of Art, New York. Her kind friendship and encouragement in the early stage of this research are important to me. Last, but not least, I have to express my sincere appreciation to Professor Heikki Hanka. In addition to providing invaluable academic advice and guidance, he has hosted all of those research seminars I attainted over the years with great wit and humour – always a wonderful refreshment for the darn good life (¡) of doctoral students and early career researchers.

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ORIGINAL PAPERS

1 INTRODUCTION

Art as expression is a fundamental feature of humanity. In response to the inner world of our cognitive, perceptual and emotive human frame,[1] it constitutes and elaborates on the social, economic and political architecture of the outer world that we are born into and live in. Springing up independently, art can be disseminated from one specific person, locale or period to another. In a global world, since the Age of New Imperialism in particular, art as an industry has further evolved from an individual undertaking to a collective manoeuvre in negotiation with various power struggles, be it political, economic or cultural. To approach such a phenomenon, Chinese contemporary art (CCA) provides an impeccable example given its historical origin, theoretical definition and artistic tradition. Applying the historical-interpretive method and covering the three key components in the making of art history – market, politics and gender (social relevance) – I argue that

> *Chinese contemporary art is the medium is the message, implying a (de)coloniality in the non-Western worlds in pursuit of modernity under the shadow of the West.*

This thesis statement is built from the perspective (a positionality) of the Sinosphere in the entangled world history in the modern times, a bold endeavour to approach China's contemporary art (as a specific art genre or style) through the perspective of McLuhan's media theory 'the medium is the message'[2] and, in particular, Mignolo's postcolonial criticism 'the darker side of modernity'[3]. Although CCA is often regarded as a regional variant of postcolonial and postmodernist expression, which mixes the Western and Chinese cultural elements and contributes to the debate of a hierarchical idea of cultural identity

[1] Noël Carroll, 'Art and Human Nature', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 62.2 (2004), 95–107.
[2] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Exhibitions of Man* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1964).
[3] Walter Mignolo, *Coloniality: The Darker Side of Modernity* (Barcelona: Museo de Arte Monderno de Barcelona, 2009).

dominated by the colonialist and imperialist powers,[4] the linking of CCA with the concept of (de)coloniality remains absent. To decode such a message of CCA, this research consisted of five independent and interrelated sub-studies on (1) foreign investment in CCA, (2) valorisation in the art industry, (3) the relationship between the system of political economy and the use of art, (4) white-cube performance of the colonial legacy in non-Western traditions, and (5) women and their art in the making of art and history in China in pursuit of modernity. One critical point in these discussions of CCA is modernity. Since over a century in 'the rest'[5] (of the world), the model of modernity or the goal of modernisation in concept and in practice has been the advanced society of Western Europe or North America. After the Cold War, this tendency has been straightened and fuelled by globalised market economics in the spirit of neoliberalism. Under such circumstances, CCA in the global cultural landscape can be regarded as a result of the latest or another radicalised globalisation or 'disguised neo-colonialism'.[6] In order to characterise this hypothesis in greater depth, the scope of this research includes an exploration of the (de)coloniality of CCA, as indicated by the title 'the darker side of contemporary art in China'. This title discernibly resonates with and pays tribute to the landmark work of Mignolo mentioned above, and hints at a nuanced semantic association with the terms 'dark' (or 'deep') world[7] from the wild side of internet culture – in the sense that in CCA the liaison among word (text), value (money) and art is often roaming in the limbo between (il)legality and (un)ethicality.

The history of CCA is the history of a rapidly changing China, one that transformed itself from an agriculture-based society to the world's factory and a global industrialised powerhouse, accompanied by escalating strategic competition with the United States in the making of a new world order. This progress is physically manifested by the development of a 'contemporary art district',[8] where the market-oriented ecosystem and infrastructure of an art industry began to take shape in the early 2000s and became a contributing factor in the museum boom at the start of the 2010s. Due to the opening-up policy of Deng Xiaoping in 1978, which adapted market economy principles under the banner of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', a good number of state-owned enterprises were forced to either upgrade or decommission. Between 1978 and

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[4] Gladston Paul, 'Problematizing the New Cultural Separatism: Critical Reflections on Contemporaneity and the Theorizing of Contemporary Chinese Art', *Modern China Studies* , 19.1 (2012), 195–270.

[5] Niall Ferguson, *Civilization : The West and the Rest* (London: Penguin Press, 2011).

[6] Peter Cox, 'Implications of Globalisation', in *Implications of Globalisation*, ed. by Anne Boran and Peter Cox (Chester : Chester Academic Press, 2007), p. 349; Nagesh Rao, Postcolonial Theory and the Demands of Political Economy', *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* , 1.2 (2000), 165–84.

[7] The term 'dark web (net)' or 'deep web (net)' refers to anything on the internet that is not indexed by and accessible via a search engine.

[8] Xiaoling (張曉凌) Chang, *Report on Chinese Contemporary Art (消費主義時代中國社會的文化寓言：中國當代藝術考察報告)* (吉林: 吉林美術出版社, 2010); Lan (周嵐) Zhou, *The Social Transformation of 798 Art Zone (空間的向度：798 藝術區的社會變遷)* (Beijing: 中國輕工業出版社, 2012); Mingliang (劉明亮) Liu, *Beijing 798 Art Zone: Field Work and Track in the Context of Marketization (北京 798 藝術區市場化語境下的田野考察與追蹤)* (Beijing: 中國文聯出版社, 2015).

1985, large-sized factory spaces were vacated one after another in major cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu and Wuhan. All of a sudden, these factories – the once-upon-a-time symbols of modernity and industrialisation – became gigantic urban monuments featuring an underdeveloped or unadvanced society. Given their spacious interiors, cheap rent and convenient locations, these spaces began to be occupied by young artists – professionally trained in art schools and newly emancipated from the formerly state-controlled system that strictly linked higher education, labour market[9] and civil registration (hukou).[10] For the first time, it became possible for young art graduates to stay in major cities (after graduation) continuing to make art while seeking opportunities from a market yet to emerge, thanks to the growing middle class of a rapidly industrialising and commercialising society.[11] A prominent example is the 798 Contemporary Art District founded in Beijing in the former military factory 718, an architectural compound of factory buildings in the Bauhaus style, constructed under the auspices of East Germany in the early 1950s. Another similar example is the Hanyang contemporary art district in Wuhan in former military factory 824, built in the 1950s on the original site of the Hanyang Arsenal[12] (the first weapons factory in the Western style established in 1891 by Zhang Zhidong[13] with the aim of modernising the country). Following the artist studios into these art districts were the commercial art galleries and art-related businesses, including material suppliers, bookstores, publishing houses and interior architect studios as well as tourism services such as souvenir shops, design boutiques, cafés and restaurants. Viewing the increasing economic impacts, local governments began to intervene or take over projects of urban planning to renew the old towns or to build new ones in corporation with privatised real-estate developers and construction companies. In addition to the primary market of commercial art galleries, dealers or agencies, the secondary market was formed as well with the establishment of international and local auction houses, art funds and celebrated collector's collections (warehouses or storages). For instance, the local auction house Jiade[14] was created in 1993, followed by Hanhai[15] in 1994 and Poly[16] in 2005. In 1994, the international auction house Sotheby's set up a local office in Shanghai (and another office in Beijing in 2007), and Christie's also opened a branch as well in Shanghai (which, in 2013, became the very first foreign auction company granted

[9] This system started to change between 1985 and 1989, college graduates could look for jobs by themselves instead of being obliged to take assigned work posts. See Zicheng (葉至誠) Ye, *Chinese Universities Personnel Management (大陸高校人事管理)* (Taipei: Independent Author, 2007).
[10] A system of household registration that controls domestic migration in China.
[11] From 19 per cent of its population in 1980 to 58 per cent in 2017. And in 2000, just 4 per cent of China's urban population was considered to be middle class, rising to over 30 per cent in 2018. See China Briefing at https://www.china-briefing.com/news/chinas-middle-class-5-questions-answered/ (Accessed 20..5.2020)
[12] In Chinese as '漢陽造'.
[13] In Chinese as '張之洞' (1837-1909).
[14] In Chinese as '嘉德'.
[15] In Chinese as '瀚海'.
[16] In Chinese as '保利'.

a license to operate inside mainland China).[17] As a result of these market operations, a growing body of clientele, consisted of local art collectors, investors or the nouveau-riche, has joined the Chinese contemporary art game. Entering the 2010s, these art actor-agents contributed to a museum boom in China.[18] In 2010, the Minsheng Art Museum (by CMBC, the first private bank in China) and the Rockbund Art Museum were built, followed by the Long Museum in 2012 and the YUZM museum in 2014, all dedicated to collecting and displaying CCA. Besides these private endeavours, public institutions also began to include CCA. In 2011, the project of M+ Museum was launched by the Hong Kong government based on a sale-donation agreement made with the leading CCA patron-collector-investor Uli Sigg[19] and, in 2012, the very first public museum of CCA the Power Station of Art was built on the very venue of the Shanghai Biennale. This brief account of the development of the physical milieu of CCA, spanning from 1978 after Deng's reform to 2012 before the rule of Xi, has illustrated the complexity of the research's subject matter – CCA, an art genre that originated from the West but which emerged and thrived in a Chinese system that had evolved from communism to state capitalism after the Cold War in the wake of globalisation throughout the post-conflict era vis-à-vis a potential Cold War II.

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[17] Christie's, 'Christies Salerooms and Offices', *Christie's* <https://www.christies.com/locations/salerooms/shanghai/> [accessed 20 May 2020].

[18] Since around the mid-2010, China has built an average of approximately 100 museums per year. By 2016 there are around 400 new museums across the country. Zhu Pei and others, 'The Museum Boom in China - Museumification of China', in *The Museum Boom in China* (New York: Columbia GSAPP, 2016).

[19] Benjamin Sutton, 'The Opening of Hong Kong's M+ Museum Could Be Delayed, Again', *South China Morning Post*, 8 May 2019.

Figure 1 A Bauhaus factory space built in the early 1950s under the auspices of East Germany and turned into an exhibition hall in the 798 Contemporary Art District (Wiki commons).

1.1 Subject Matter: Art, China, Contemporaneity

Before beginning the inquiry, it is necessary to clarify the subject matter indicated by the three words *contemporary*, *art* and *China* with a phenomenological survey. Judging by the existing literature on Chinese contemporary art (CCA), various ways to combine these three words are identified: 'Chinese contemporary art', 'contemporary Chinese art', 'contemporary art in China' or 'art in contemporary China'. Discernibly, there is a semantic nuance in the significations created by the different combinations of these three signifiers and each actually reflects a specific perspective, be it art historical, sociocultural or geopolitical. For example, there should be a difference between viewing the subject matter of CCA from the West and from the non-Western worlds. However, such concrete speculation is curiously much neglected in the rich discussions of CCA, given that an entirely new journal has been created in 2014 with an exclusive focus on CCA in the aim to explore the relationship between contemporary art and Chinese cultural identity since.[20] To pursue this further, it is worth noting that I, as an Asian

[20] See the Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art, ISSN 20517041, founded in 2014 with the Australian art historian Paul Gladston as the founding editor.

researcher from the Sinosphere and based in Finland – a geographical connection between the West and the East – will explore such a difference in a comparative manner from a macroscopic point of view in entangled history and in the global landscape of arts and culture, making my best effort to conduct an objective study. In addition to the postcolonial standpoint of 'you are where you think' as such, the main reason for my choice of using the three key words 'China', 'contemporary' and 'art' to indicate the subject matter is the semantically confusing definitions of the set of terms relating to it in the Western or mainstream version of art history, including 'modern art', 'contemporary art', 'global art' and/or 'world art', 'indigenous art', 'aboriginal art' and 'national art' or 'Chinese art'. Differentiating these specific terms should be a prerequisite to approach the subject matter of this research, Chinese contemporary art.

One simple but efficient way to clarify the conceptual relationships (signification) between the words (signifiers) and content (the signified) of the subject matter is provided by Google's image search. Entering the key words as either 'contemporary Chinese art' and 'Chinese contemporary art' (Figure 2), the results are rather similar although the former is mostly used in the anglophone world [21] and the latter the sinophone. [22] Semantically speaking, the term 'contemporary Chinese art' focuses more on the temporality and 'Chinese contemporary art' the spatiality. There is a clear epistemological space between these two sets of signifiers which relates to a delineation of historical construction, artistic tradition and geocultural power. To approach such a space loaded with contested ideologies, it is indispensable to discuss three groups of concept and practice – 'art', 'modern art' and 'contemporary art' – with references to their historical, cultural and geographical contexts.

[21] Paul Gladston, *Contemporary Chinese Art* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2014); Jeanne Boden, *Contemporary Chinese Art* (Brussels: VUB University Press, 2016); Peggy Wang, *Contemporary Chinese Art* (Duke: Duke University Press, 2010).

[22] Peng (吕澎) Lü, *China Contemporary Art in the Historical Process and Market Trends* (Pekin University Press, 2009).

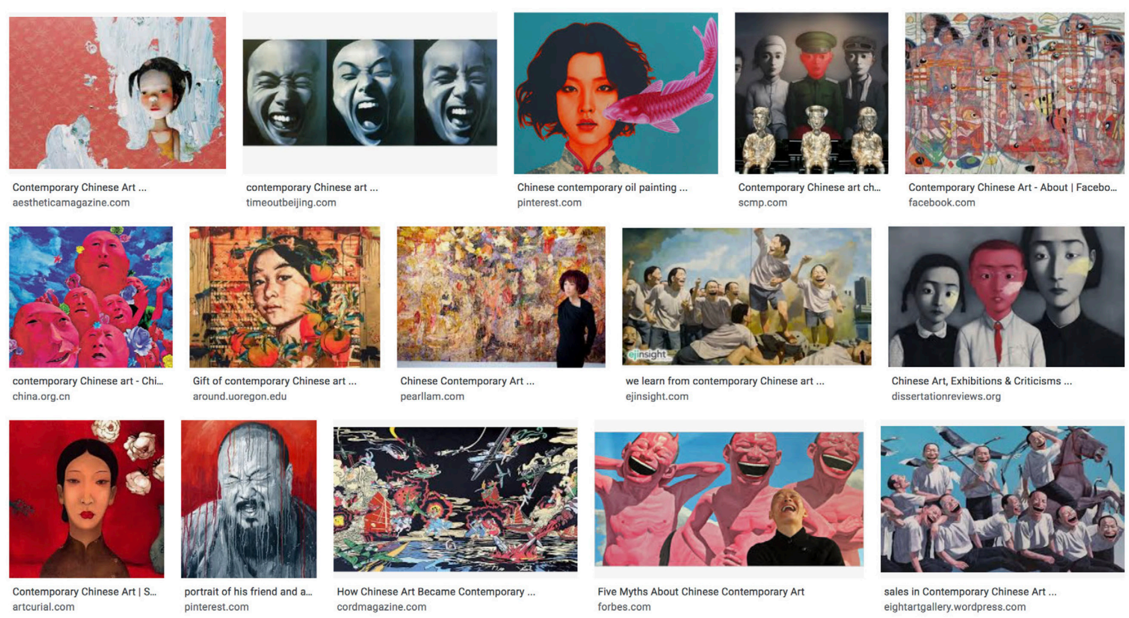

Figure 2 Google Image Search with keyword 'contemporary Chinese art' (2020-04-07 at 20.35.41).

In reality, the idea of '(fine) art' is itself a modern invention[23] resulting from the institutionalisation of art production and consumption in the modern epoch in relation to a changing social system of market economy after industrialisation. Originating from Western Europe in the 18th century, 'fine art' denotes those artworks such as painting or sculpture that could be characterised, classified or categorised by technical skill, imagination and aesthetic expression. Working for an anonymous market (created by an enlarging middle class) instead of known patrons or commissioners, artists acquired a romantic image as an isolated individual concentrated on expressing his inner life experience and feelings[24]. In response to the shifting social paradigms faced by the market economy, the definition of (fine) art has been constantly re-examined by the emerging art theories and philosophies, such as modernism and postmodernism – the former appeared in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the latter sought to contradict the former with a new interpretation and narrative. Conventionally, the art created during the period of modernism (from the 1860s to the 1960s) is called 'modern art' and after the 1960s 'contemporary art'[25] despite the fact that since the mid-19th century there have been more than two hundreds art movements or theories ranging from Classicism, Baroque, and Realism to Impressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, Pop Art and Media Art. Identified and categorised according to specific features in style, theory or artist group, each of these art movements has been considered as a new 'avant-garde' at the time. This

[23] Raymond Corbey, Robert Layton, and Jeremy Tanner, 'Archaeology and Art', *A Companion to Archaeology*, 2008, 357–79.
[24] Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England 1680-1768* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1991).
[25] Naomi Blumberg, 'What's the Difference Between Modern Art and Contemporary Art?', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.).

development and composition of art history is West centric. On the one hand, it includes exotic art elements from overseas colonies and, on the other, disseminates its structural narratives to 'the rest' following the expansion of colonisation and imperialism. Although decolonisation as a political movement took place in most colonised countries in Africa and Asia after WWII, the colonial legacy as such embodied in the making of (contemporary) art and art history has remained well-kept. Coming into the post-conflict era, Western art historians like Charlotte Bydler or Hans Belting began to rename 'contemporary art' as 'global art'[26] in an attempt to compose a global art history[27] or a history of global art.[28] To a certain degree, such an endeavour not only consolidates the West-centric cultural perspective but also results in terminological confusion in the art history (of the West) per se – given that the term 'global art'[29] or 'world art'[30] has been widely used in anthropology and archaeology[31] to indicate diverse traditions of art, heterogenous to the West, when replacing the former terms like 'aboriginal art' or 'indigenous art' to avoid bias of racism as a response to the postcolonial criticism in the 1980s. This can be elucidated by another Google image search with the two sets of keywords: 'Chinese art' and 'Chinese contemporary art' or 'contemporary Chinese art'. Ostensibly, the assorted content of 'Chinese art' falls within the scope of ethnography, referring to 'aboriginality' or 'indigeneity' (Figure 3) in an art made in a specific medium, style and philosophy that is native to the longstanding cultural system of the Sinosphere, but heterogeneous within the Western ('modern' and 'contemporary') one. It is worth noting that the semantic implication of 'Chinese art' in Western art history does not exist in Chinese art history, which is independent from the former with its own artistic methodology, aesthetic tradition and philosophical system. In this light, the term 'contemporary Chinese art' risks denying the original Chinese art tradition and suggesting that the making of 'Chinese art' in the contemporary era has to follow the (globalised) Western art convention, though it is possible to add a local touch by inserting respective traditional or indigenous cultural elements.[32] This, however, is clearly a false impression, which becomes evident as the divide in art teaching, making and consumption in the Sinosphere known as 'Western art' and 'national art' continues to exist. It is worth noting that this dialectic discussion does not deny the effort of some of contemporary art's theoreticians and

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[26] Charlotte Bydler, *The Global Art World Inc.: On the Globalization of Contemporary Art* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2004); Hans Belting, 'Contemporary Art as Global Art: A Critical Estimate', in *The Global Art World: Audiences, Markets, and Museums* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009), pp. 38–73.

[27] Kelly Clarkson, *The Possibility of a Global Art History* (Grin Verlag, 2013).

[28] Diana Newall, *Art and Its Global Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

[29] Sarah Dornhof, *Situating Global Art: Topologies, Terporailities, Trajectories* (Transcript Verlag, 2018); MaryAnn F Kohl, *Global Art* (Gryphon House, US, 1999).

[30] Wilfried Van Damme and Kitty Zijlmans, *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches* (Leiden: Valiz, 2008).

[31] Oscar Moro-Abadía, 'The History of Archaeology as a "Colonial Discourse"', *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology*, 16.2 (2006), 4.

[32] Paul; Paul Gladston, *Somewhere (and Nowhere) between Modernity and Tradition: Towards a Critique of International and Indigenous Perspectives on the Significance of Contemporary Chinese Art* (London , 2014).

practitioners to negotiate this West-originated and globalised art form or style with the non-Western (regional, aboriginal or indigenous and national) art traditions.[33] Moreover, it does not neglect the potential of expressing or experimenting with China's traditional art making, theories and philosophies in the form of contemporary art. Instead, it is a humble attempt to address 'the elephant in the room' – that CCA reflects a Western coloniality in the post-conflict era where the market economy has reinforced the cultural hegemony of the West that prevails globally through colonisation and imperialism – without falling into the heated debate of nationalism[34] and internationalism (or universalism and globalism) in the arts and culture in terms of China. As such, given the geocultural origin of contemporary art, the entangled world history since the Age of New Imperialism and the existence of China's divided art traditions, I opt for the term 'Chinese contemporary art' in this research. It denotes the following subject matter: the 'contemporary art' (as an art genre featured with specific form, style, medium and/or theme and theories) in China or by Chinese artists after 1978, the year when post-Mao China reopened to the world (the West) and began to rise.

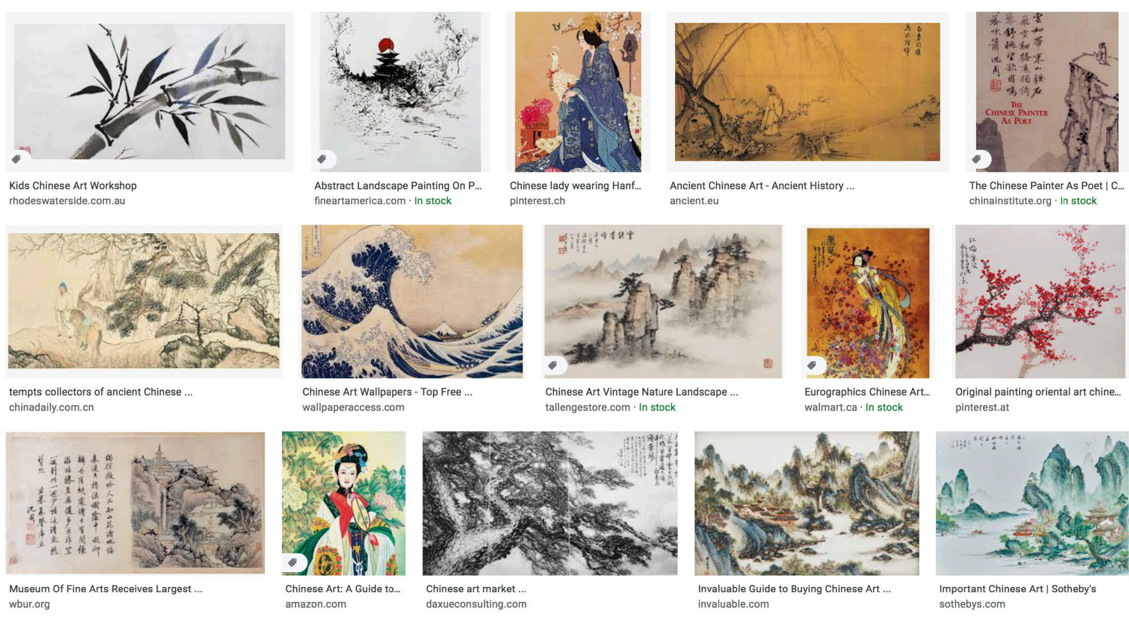

Figure 3 Google Image Search with keyword 'Chinese art' (2020-04-07 at 20.37.00)

[33] Tsong-Zung Chang, Howarth-Gladstone Lynn, and Gladstone Paul, 'Inside the Yellow Box: Chang Tsong-Zung (Johnson Chang) in Conversation with Lynne Howarth-Gladston and Paul Gladston', *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, 2.1 (2015), 103–17.
[34] Frank Vigneron, '"Conservative Nativist" Chinese Art in Hong Kong and Mainland China', *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, 1.1 (2014), 25–43.

1.2 State of the Art

The emergence and rapid development of Chinese contemporary art (CCA) over the past few decades has attracted rich scholarly interest and resulted in an abundant literature. The topics being covered in the studies of CCA are diverse, including curatorial studies,[35] art history,[36] art and politics,[37] art economics,[38] art philosophy[39] as well as museum studies.[40] Among such dynamic discussions, two works are found to be directly relevant to the inquiry of this research that 'Chinese contemporary art is the medium is the message': *Red Creativity: Culture and Modernity in China*[41] and *Contemporary Chinese Art, Aesthetic Modernity and Zheng Peili: Towards a Critical Contemporaneity.* The former examines the creative industry of China in the post-Mao era with a focus on the relationship between culture, modernity and nation-state, and proposes the concept of 'traumatic modernity' to approach China's modernisation as it encountered the radical expansion of Western colonisation. The latter focuses on how to define and interpret the modernity of CCA in a negotiation between Western aesthetics (a philosophy cultivated in the European artistic, historic and cultural tradition throughout the post-Enlightenment, modern, postmodern and contemporary times) and the Chinese one initiated by and marked by Confucianism. However, neither has directly engaged in the cultural theory of '(de)coloniality', proposed and developed by a group of postcolonialists from South America, including Mignolo, Quijano and many others.[42] In the attempt to bridge this critical knowledge gap, this research aims to carry out a comprehensive examination and in-depth analysis of how CCA as a medium, from the viewpoint of entangled world history, speaks of coloniality following the decolonisation of non-Western worlds and after the Cold War. It is worth noting that in recent years there has been increasing demand for 'decolonising art history' or 'making art histories

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[35] Minglu Gao, 'Changing Motivations of Chinese Contemporary Art since the Mid-1990s', *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 11.2–3 (2012), 209–19.
[36] Minglu Gao, 'The '85 Movement: Avant-Garde Art in the Post-Mao Era' (Harvard, 1999); Hong Wu, *Making History: Wu Hong on Contemporary Art* (Beijing: Timeone 8, 2008).
[37] Jane DeBevoise, *Between State and Market: Chinese Contemporary Art in the Post-Mao Era* (London: Brill, 2014).
[38] Alessia Zorloni, *The Economics of Contemporary Art: Markets, Strategies and Stardom* (Springer Cham, 2013); *An Anthropology of Contemporary Art: Practices, Markets, and Collectors*, ed. by Thomas Fillitz and Paul Van der Grijp (Vienna: Bloomsbury, 2017); Canice Prendergast, 'The Market for Contemporary Art', 2014; Noah Horowitz, *Art of the Deal : Contemporary Art in a Global Financial Market* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2011).
[39] Eva Kit Wah Man, *Issues of Contemporary Art and Aesthetics in Chinese Context* (Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2015).
[40] *The Global Art World: Audiences, Markets, and Museums*, ed. by Hans Belting and Andrea Buddensieg (Michigan: The Art Pub Incorporated, 2009).
[41] Justin O'Connor and Xin Gu, *Red Creative: Culture and Modernity in China* (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 2020).
[42] Walter Mignolo and Alvina Hoffmann, 'Interview-Walter Mignolo/Part 2: Key Concepts Written by E-International Relations Interview-Walter Mignolo/Part 2: Key Concepts You Developed the Idea of Decoloniality. Can You Elaborate on It and Briefly Contrast It from Postcolonialism?', *E-International Relations* (Relations, E-International, 2017).

decentred (from the Western narrative)'.[43] This research pursues this inclination by agreeing with the opinion that 'post-colonial is not "post" yet'.[44] In examining this specific message delivered through CCA (as an art genre in its integrity), being a medium or media of intercultural and transcultural communication, this research should highlight the dark(er) side or deep world of contemporary art in post-Mao China with a focus on three key components of art history: the market, politics and gender (social relevance).

1.2.1 Research Scope: (De)Coloniality of Chinese Contemporary Art

To determine the postcolonial scope of the research, it is essential to revisit the question of dating regarding CCA. Unlike Belting[45] or Dornhof,[46] who consider the starting point of 'global art' to be 1989 or 1991, most art historians focusing on contemporary art in China regard 1978 as the beginning of CCA.[47] Apparently, the former view the world from the Western perspective and take the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 or the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 as the historical turning point at which a new age, marked by free communication and the market economy, should prevail. As to those who regard 1978 as the beginning of CCA, the opening-up policy of Deng is the decisive moment from which modern China begins to enter the contemporary era. Although CCA is literally part of global art(s), to consider China's contemporary art as 'global art' in a way is to justify the legitimacy of proliferating the Western art tradition into non-Western worlds, including China, with a risk of excluding or diminishing the modern and contemporary developments of traditional or Chinese art. In addition, the fact that CCA is an imported or learned art genre from the West is also evidenced by the gap or disconnection with local Chinese audiences as well as in the current primary and secondary art markets of China. It is under such circumstances that this research sets out to investigate the complex question of 'modernity (modernisation)' in the arts and culture of modern China, centred with and embodied in CCA, under the shadow of being modelled on the West.

To approach the '(de)coloniality' of CCA, it is indispensable to have a generic understanding of the historical background of China's modernisation in response to its being semi-colonised since 1840, decolonised (after WWII) and closed behind the Iron Curtain (1949–1978) with Macau, Hong Kong and Taiwan falling outside of the regime under the auspices of the West (until 1997, with the exception of Taiwan). Despite the longstanding history of cultural exchange between Europe and China, it is not until the radical expansion of New Imperialism that the former has brought overwhelming impacts to the latter, which therefore has been urged to 'modernise' itself in order to guard and fight

[43] Catherine Grant and Dorothy Price, *Decolonizing Art History* (Association for Art History, 2020).
[44] Tiago Sant'Ana, Vitjitua Ndjiharine, and Jose Mendoca, 'Do We Really Live in the Era of Postcolonialism?', *Goethe Institut*, 2019.
[45] Belting.
[46] Dornhof.
[47] DeBevoise; Xiaoling (張曉凌) Chang; Yan Zhou, *A History of Contemporary Chinese Art* (Singapore: Springer Verlag, Singapore, 2020).

for its sovereignty. Becoming semi-colonised by the leading colonial powers (namely the British, French, Russian, German, Austrian, Italian, American and Japanese empires) during the 'century of humiliation' (from 1940 to after WWII), the process of China's 'modernisation' and/or 'Westernisation' has been long and tortuous in the company of numerous civil wars. Unlike the British and French colonies in South and Southeast Asia, where 'modernisation' (or 'renewal' of local cultures or civilisations) was carried out and forced by the colonial governments by orders coming from the metropoles of London and Paris, the enterprise of modernisation in China was self-initiated and selective – starting from military technology, ranging to the system of political economy and eventually reaching the arts and culture of people's everyday lives. In this light, the opening-up policy of 1978 can be regarded as a landmark for the country's third round of radical 'modernisation (Westernisation)'. This process featured a major shift in the system of political economy. The first round was the 1911 Revolution and the second the 1949 Revolution. Together, these three points stand as major pillars among the many social, political and cultural reforms in China's modern history. In terms of the art world in China, after 1911 (and before 1949) under the rule of the Nationalist Party, the Western style of art making and consumption began to penetrate into China through the 'modernised (Westernised)' system of (art) education. For example, in the 1920s, art academies in the Western style were established one after another throughout the country. And ever since, the so-called 'Western painting (or art)'[48] in contrast to the so-called 'national (traditional) painting (or art)'[49] have been taught and learned in the formal and informal education systems of the country as two separate majors or subjects. Under Mao's rule from 1949 to 1978, arts and culture served government propaganda, exclusively, and this has resulted in a long break of experimenting with new art styles in both departments of Western and national arts. It had to wait until 1978 that the former department in particular became 'liberated' from strict political censorship and was able to 'catch up' with the world (the West) by embracing the very many art movements and theories, especially those under the label of modernism or postmodernism.[50] In the meanwhile, the 'national art' (traditional art or 'Chinese art') began to be incorporated into the grand narrative of 'world art' (or 'global art') – a 'periphery' in the classic version of art history centred on the art made in the West, especially in the former metropoles of Western Europe and North America. It is worth noting that there has been a vigorous artistic attempt to merge or mix the two art traditions since the 1920s in pursuit of modernity or the avant-garde. For example, some of the first generation of Chinese artists who went to study at the Beaux Arts in Paris became leading figures known for their 'Chinese (or national) painting' (ink and paper), featured with new styles learned from the West (as expressionism, Fauvism or Cubism), like Xu Beihong (1895–1953) or Lin

[48] In Chinese as '西畫', denoting the art forms of the West such as oil painting, water colour and coal drawing or charcoal sketch.
[49] In Chinese as '國畫', meaning traditional Chinese painting with ink and paper.
[50] Aihwa Ong, 'What Marco Polo Forgot: Contemporary Chinese Art Reconfigures the Global', *Current Anthropology*, 53.4 (2011).

Fengmian (1900–1991). While the line between the Western and the Chinese (or traditional) in the creation of artwork per se is much debated in CCA, the grand divide of the two is more than obvious as can be seen, like it has been said, in the reception of the local art audience, market and education system. Overlooking such a fact and critiquing CCA from the Western perspective – as expressed by the term 'separatism'[51] or assuming 'Western' as 'international' or 'global' and 'Chinese' as 'indigenous'[52] – in a certain way is to help continue the Western hegemony in the global cultural landscape today. In this light, it is important to locate CCA in the discourse of modernisation, coloniality and decoloniality from the perspective of postcolonialism.

Rooted in the literary criticism of deconstructionism and post-structuralism and genealogically tied to Western colonisation, the concept of 'coloniality' refers to 'long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism'[53] (and especially of the New Imperialism, in the case of China) beyond the actual sociopolitical borders of colonial administrations. In terms of CCA, I suggest that it signifies 'long-standing patterns' of Western art (especially the avant-garde or modern and postmodern art) that emerged in the rest of the world as a result of colonisation or semi-colonisation (as Qing China and modern China) before WWII as well as globalised market economy (in contemporary China) after the Cold War. While a detailed discussion of (de)coloniality will be presented in section 2.1, it is worth noting here that it is from the aforementioned macroscopic and historical point of view that CCA as a specific art genre in its integrity is regarded as a medium/media of communication – be it cultural-political or cultural-economic – that contains or carries in itself a message of (de)coloniality, speaking of a Western cultural supremacy disseminated by the actor-agents of Western art powers and consolidated or retained by local art authorities. This analysis may risk being too general, but should bring new insights to the so-called 'globalisation' of the cultural landscape. This process is a progressive one, in which imbalanced or one-sided 'cultural exchange' or 'cultural communication (translation)' between the West and the rest has been carried out and intensified by military force or economic power. The struggles of decolonisation and decoloniality (delinking) have persisted, especially in the face of a potential neo-Cold War led by the United States and China.

1.2.2 Objectives: Market, Politics, Gender (Social Relevance)

To decode the 'Chinese contemporary art is the medium is the message of a coloniality', the research comprises three major subjects in the making of art history: market, politics and gender (social relevance). As such, the first objective is to understand the market of CCA. Over the past two decades, the successes of CCA in the marketplace have frequently occupied the newspaper headlines in

[51] Paul.

[52] Gladston, *Somewhere (and Nowhere) between Modernity and Tradition: Towards a Critique of International and Indigenous Perspectives on the Significance of Contemporary Chinese Art*.

[53] Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 'ON THE COLONIALITY OF BEING', *Cultural Studies*, 21.2–3 (2007), 240–70.

China and abroad. Despite being a marginal topic in the field of arts economics[54] or cultural economics,[55] the market of CCA has been little explored from the perspective of postcolonial criticism – which mostly focuses on the phenomenon of globalisation or neo-colonialism in development studies,[56] business management,[57] medicine,[58] digital culture[59] and tourism. As contemporary art is deeply involved with the globalised market system originating from the West, as widely discussed in the academic forum of CCA, it is justifiable to presume a postcolonial interpretation embedded in the connection among the international art market, the development of CCA and the unprecedented growth of China's economics. Viewing the studies of the 'heritage game'[60] devised by cultural economists, the first goal of the research is to understand how the Chinese contemporary 'art game' is configured, implemented and developed. The questions to ask here are the following: how does globalisation evolve into the art world of post-Mao China? Is there an identifiable actor–agent network that activates the dynamics of an emerging art economy? What is the value creation process of CCA amidst the institutional void of an ecosystem or infrastructure of the art industry in contemporary China? The expected findings and results of these inquiries should be able to shed some light on the formation of the dark(er) side or deep world of CCA, especially that in the post-conflict era the capital investment is often the hard power (instead of the armed force) for the West to continue conquering or exploiting 'the rest' of the world, in general. The targeted period for this part of the studies is approximately ranging from 1989 to 2012, when the global art market confidence towards China was made strong after the Tiananmen Square protests and before the rule of Xi under the Chinese Dream, for which the sophisticated system of censorship in China on the arts and culture (including contemporary art) has become much stronger.

The second objective of the research is to explore the impact factor of international or global politics on the development of CCA. This perspective is seldom highlighted, unlike the topic of domestic political criticism of China within and by CCA, which is one of the areas most concentrated on in the art studies of CCA, especially in the anglophone world of Australia, the United States and the UK. Critics from these areas tend to critique, analyse and interpret CCA from a libertarian (or separationist or regionalist) view, emphasising, for example, the politically divided China(s) as mainland China, Hong Kong[61] and

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[54] Zorloni.
[55] A Victor and D Ginsburgh, *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*, ed. by Victor A Ginsburgh and David Throsby, *Handbooks in Economics*, 1st ed (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006).
[56] Rowland Atkinson and Gary Bridge, 'Globalisation and the New Urban Colonialism', in *The Gentrification Debates* (Routledge, 2010), p. 377.
[57] Mehdi Boussebaa, Glenn Morgan, and Andrew Sturdy, 'Constructing Global Firms? National, Transnational and Neocolonial Effects in International Management Consultancies', *Organization Studies*, 33.4 (2012), 465–86.
[58] Hans Karle and others, 'Neo-Colonialism versus Sound Globalisation Policy in Medical Education', *Medical Education*, 42.10 (2008), 956–58.
[59] Taskeen Adam, 'Digital Neocolonialism and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs): Colonial Pasts and Neoliberal Futures', *Learning, Media and Technology*, 44.3 (2019), 365–80.
[60] Alan Peacock and Ilde Rizzo, *The Heritage Game* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[61] Frank Vigneron, *I like Hong Kong: Art and Deterritorialization* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2010).

Taiwan,[62] and often regarding CCA 'as part of the a liberation of culture'. This part of the research, from the viewpoint of structuralism, examines the mechanism or process of art's value definition and accretion with respect to the use of art in a specific (meta)context – be it cultural, economic or political. In this light, the system of political economy in a country plays a key role in setting up the framework for the determination of art's value within its sociopolitical territory. Although the influence of the political system on the art market in China has attracted scholarly concern, [63] it is worth considering whether alternative models exist for the development of CCA. For example, the art system in the welfare society of a Nordic country instead of a capitalist society in the Anglo-American style, or the planned economy under the rule of Mao and state capitalism after 1978. As in the heritage game, politics plays a dominating role in the Chinese contemporary art game. Just here it seems that what is in play is not only the national politics but also (or especially) the international politics which the globalised neoliberal market economy is supported and embedded in. How to understand such a phenomenon? Is there any political prospect conceived in CCA outside of the canvas under the auspices of foreign investments? Especially when the content of CCA has been in line with the contemporary art of Western Europe and North America, and China has been shifting from a social system of communism to state capitalism. In addition, 'you are where you think': the 'way of seeing' CCA should differ from the West to the East according to their respective intellectual traditions and cultural systems. To approach the politics of coloniality therefore is the core task of the research. No matter the globalised style of contemporary art, CCA is an Asian art made in a non-Western country. To examine how this Asian art is seen both in the West and the rest of the world should bring new insights to the coloniality of CCA. An important question to bear in mind here is whether contemporary art is facilitating the neo-colonialism of the West to the rest in the field of arts and culture through market forces.

One effective way to demonstrate how CCA is an imported art form alien to the local public in China is to examine its social relevance. The third objective of this study is therefore to investigate the question of gender in the making of art and art history in modern and contemporary China. Presented as avant-garde art, CCA is believed by many to be a way or an instrument to express the sociopolitical imaginations regarding contemporary China based on universal norms and values, such as democracy or human rights. The Chinese 'political pop' favoured by the international art market provides an implicit example.[64] However, it risks being a mere myth because of CCA's lacking a strong connection to the common public. This problem can be best demonstrated by the apparent underdevelopment of Chinese feminist art, [65] while other art

[62] Paul Gladston and Katie Hill, 'Contemporary Chinese Art and Criticality: From General to the Particular', *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 11.2 (2012), 99–116.
[63] Iain Robertson, 'A Comparative Study of the Influence of Political Systems on the Art Markets of East Asia and China', *Arts and the Market*, 8.2 (2018), 2056–4945.
[64] Terry Smith, *Contemporary Art : World Currents* (Pearson , 2011).
[65] Lisa Movius, 'Feminist Exhibition in China Suddenly Axed Following Alleged Governmental Pressure-Show in Shanghai Cancelled after Being Deemed "Too Sensitive"

movements or theories of the West have been well-received and much experimented with in CCA. How to approach such a phenomenon? What is the traditional gender role in the making of Chinese art and art history? Is it the contribution of the 'second sex'[66] identifiable in the pursuit of the country's modernisation? The expected findings and results of this sub-study can be inspirational towards the question of how exactly contemporary art – a realm considered to be the most revolutionary and advanced and 'avant-garde' in ideas – reflects on the society of contemporary China.

1.3 Research Design, Methodology and Materials

The aforementioned research scope and objectives are fulfilled by five work packages which explore the following areas: (1) foreign investments in CCA, (2) value creation in the contemporary art industry, (3) relations between the system of political economy and the use of art, (4) colonial legacy in the arts and culture in non-Western countries, and (5) women and their art in the making of art and art history in modern China. Covered by the five independent articles published with international journals or as conference proceeding, the three sub-themes (market, politics and gender) are treated in the interrelated sections of the respective articles as illustrated in the chart below.

Table 1 The research design and thesis structure with five thematic articles

The Darker Side of Contemporary Art in China *Chinese contemporary art is the medium is the message*					
Theme / realms (covered)	**Article I** *F(i)DI network*	**Article II** valorisation process	**Article III** *political economy*	**Article IV** *white-cube coloniality*	**Article V** women and their art
Market	x	x	x		
Politics	x		x	x	x
Gender		x			x

The dimension of 'market' in CCA is covered by the first, the second and the third articles respectively on the topics of the actor-agent network of foreign (in)direct investment, the process of valorisation in contemporary art and the relationship between art and the system of political economy. 'Politics' is treated in the first, the third, the fourth (which examines the ways of seeing art in non-Western cultures) and the fifth article, (which inspects the role of women and their art in

to Run during the 70th Anniversary of Country's Founding', *The Art Newspaper*, 7 October 2019.
[66] Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe: Les Faits et Les Mythes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949).

the making of Chinese art and art history). 'Gender (social relevance)' is discussed in the second and the fifth articles. Covering more than these three sub-themes of this thesis, the extensive findings and results of the five articles are sufficient to decipher the thesis argument 'CCA is the medium is the message of coloniality'.

Given the theoretical nature of this research, the primary method being employed is the historical-interpretive method. Since the history of Chinese contemporary art is still in the making, the method of content analysis (including visual analysis and text analysis) is applied as well in specific discussions relating to recent events. It is worth noting that the order of presenting the research findings of the five work packages is not in chronological order but arranged according to their contributions to the three dimensions of art history this research aims to concentrate on – market, politics and gender (social relevance). This also renders the structure of the dissertation, as seen in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, which report on the theoretical foundation and results of the studies. Chapter 4 is designated to discussing the theoretical and practical implications of this research, the limit and validity of it as well as the suggestions for future studies. The research design and main theories applied can be illustrated as the following diagram, a roadmap of this inclusive and tortuous courteous research journey.

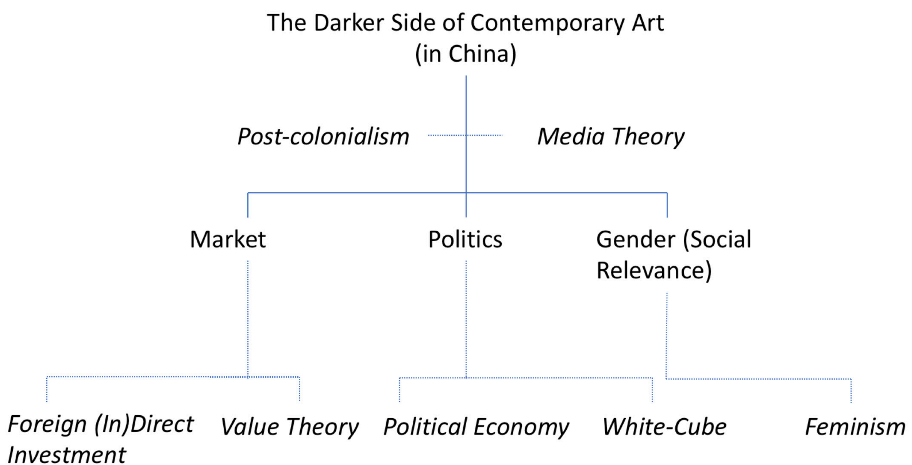

Figure 4 Research Design of the Thesis

As a theoretical inquiry by nature and from the perspective of macrohistory, this dissertation explores the darker side of contemporary art in China as a postcolonial phenomenon in the global cultural landscape. It mainly makes use of secondary materials instead of primary ones (unlike most art criticism or commentary studies relating to CCA). One advantage of this deliberate decision is to avoid getting too close to the market, or to be involved with the Chinese contemporary art game as described in the first and second articles on,

respectively, foreign investments and the formula of value creation and accretion in CCA. In addition, applying secondary materials is a common practice in cultural studies, the subject field to which this interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research belongs, along with art history, Asian (or China) studies and postcolonial studies.

2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

This section is made independent from section 1.2 State of the Art (in literature review) due to the importance of addressing the logical connection between the main and the subordinate theoretical frameworks of the research, crucial to the validity of the thesis argument 'Chinese contemporary art is the medium is the message'. As introduced, this hypothesis is built on the postcolonial theory of (de)coloniality supported by three sub-studies on the key dimensions of art history – market, politics and gender (social relevance) – achieved by five independent and interrelated studies focusing on five different subjects. The first one is a network study that investigates the actor-agents of foreign investments in CCA, centred with two leading patron-investor-collectors from the West, active in China between 1989 and 2013. Studying the business model of their (in)directly-associated transnational art enterprises, the market dynamics of CCA should be elucidated. The second is to examine the value-added process of CCA, using the analytical methods. It approaches the business concept and practice of 'value creation', 'value added' and 'value chain' embedded in the ecosystem or infrastructure of art industry and reveals the grammar of Chinese contemporary 'art game'. In proposing a ranking system comprising three types of value definition in (contemporary) art – 'artistic value', 'market value' and 'social value' – this sub-study elucidates indirectly the fact that CCA lacks sufficient social relevance as being inapproachable or incomprehensible to the common public. This then links to the third research task to understand the relationship between various systems of political economy and the use of (contemporary) art. In addition to the capitalist and communist societies, the welfare social tradition is focused on here with a case study to explore an alternative model for the development of (contemporary) art in the non-Western world. The fourth inspects the phenomenological demonstration of coloniality in a museum institution, a cultural legacy of imperialism pervasive in the former colonies of the Western powers in Asia. The white-cube theory is employed here to illustrate the ways of seeing art (self) embodied in museum exhibitions. The fifth task examines the performance of women's images and their art in the making of Chinese art and art history. Instead of the feminist theory commonly used in the

field of literary criticism[67] and social studies,[68] the method of visual analysis is applied here to investigate the gender issue reflected in the Chinese visual culture and art world under the pursuit of modernisation. This work visually makes explicit the complex cultural influence of the West towards China since modern times, which is reflected as well in the existing gap among the market, artistic and social values of CCA.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

In addition to the basic tone set by McLuhan's media theory in relation to CCA as a medium or media of intercultural and transcultural communication (however imbalanced or one-sided it is), the backbone of the overarching conceptual framework of this research is the critical theory of (de)coloniality – proposed and developed a group of postcolonialists from South America starting in the 1970s and popularised in the 1990s. The term 'coloniality' was first proposed by the Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (1928–2018)[69] and it has been further developed and made widely known through the work of the Argentinean literary critic Walter Mignolo (1941–). It has also been followed by a diverse range of scholarly interest in African Studies[70] and Asian Studies covering the geographic areas of South, Southeast and East Asia (including India, Thailand,[71] China[72] and Korea[73]) as well as subjects such as politics, law,[74] identity, phenomenology,[75] colonial literature,[76] modernisation, tourism,[77]

[67] Xiaohong (張小虹) Chang, *Fashioning Modernity (時尚現代性)* (Taipei: Linking Publishing Company, 2016).
[68] (Birge 2004; Yang 2006)
[69] Aníbal Quijano, 'Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America', *International Sociology*, 15.2 (2000), 215–32; Aníbal Quijano, 'COLONIALITY AND MODERNITY/RATIONALITY', *Cultural Studies*, 21.2–3 (2007), 168–78.
[70] Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 'GLOBAL COLONIALITY AND THE CHALLENGES OF CREATING AFRICAN FUTURES', *The Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, 36.2 (2020). Duncan Oman, 'Decolonization, Decoloniality, and the Future of African Studies: A Conversation with Dr. Sabelo Dnlovu-Gatsheni', *Items Insights from the Social Sciences*, 2020
[71] Peter A Jackson, 'The Performative State: Symi-Coloniality and the Tyranny of Images in Modern Thailand', *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 19.2 (1986), 219–53.
[72] Marius Meinhof, 'Colonial Temporality and Chinese National Modernization Discourses', *InterDisciplines*, 1 (2017), 51–79; Gerald Roche, 'Articulating Language Oppression: Colonialism, Coloniality and the Erasure of Tibet's Minority Languages', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 53.5 (2019), 487–514.
[73] Paik Nak-Chung, 'Coloniality in Korea And A South Korean Project For Overcoming Modernity', *Interventions*, 2.1 (2000), 73–86.
[74] Renisa Mawani, 'Law as Temporality: Colonial Politics and Indian Settlers', *UC Irvine Law Review*, 4 (2014).
[75] Alejandro A. Vallega, 'Displacements—Beyond the Coloniality of Images', *Research in Phenomenology*, 41.2 (2011), 206–27.
[76] Richard Watts, *Packaging Post/Coloniality: The Manufacture of Literary Identity in the Francophone World* (Lexington Books, 2005).
[77] Sarah N.R. Wijesinghe, 'Researching Coloniality: A Reflection on Identity', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 82 (2020), 102901.

racism,[78] feminism,[79] education philosophy, performing art[80] and human rights.[81] To have a firm grasp on how the darker side of contemporary art in China applies the notion of (de)coloniality, the discussion here will focus on the concept of (de)coloniality, centred around Mignolo's work, and its application and contestation in China Studies – the field most relevant to this research that was one of the first attempts to apply the concept to CCA.

Trained as a semiotician from the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris, Mignolo published the landmark work in postcolonialism *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Colonisation and the Discontinuity of the Classical Tradition* in 1992, reflecting on the cultural extension of the metropoles to the colonial peripheries (as seen in the hegemonic norms and values that guided the semiotic practices) and the local resistance and adaptation to it (as manifested in the articulation from the perspective of native population).[82] Focusing on the settler societies of the Americas, Mignolo has engaged in the postcolonial tradition of literary criticism and developed a series of studies, starting from the theory building of 'subaltern' – a term coined by the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) to describe the socioeconomic status of the natives in an imperial colony. In 2000, Mignolo published the *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking*,[83] which asserted the idea that 'no modernity (is) without coloniality'. This concept has served as a concluding point towards two types of critiques of 'modernity', from within and without – the former is internal as the postmodernism and deconstruction in Europe; and the latter external as the subaltern rationality in the Americas. In the *Globalization and the De-Colonial Option* of *Cultural Studies*[84] published in 2007, Mignolo went on to consolidate this decolonial thinking and make it a specific critical theory in the Jewish critical tradition of the Frankfort School, which has been entangled with racism and coloniality in Europe. This book has explored the postcolonial realities and relationships between the colonisers and the colonised peoples of colours outside of Europe. In the *Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options (Latin America Otherwise)*[85] published in 2011, Mignolo continued to predict the end of the coloniality cycle in the global

[78] José David Saldívar, 'UNSETTLING RACE, COLONIALITY, AND CASTE', *Cultural Studies*, 21.2–3 (2007), 339–67.
[79] Lugones Maria, 'Toward a Decolonial Feminism', *Hypatia*, 25.4 (2010), 742–59.
[80] Vera Mackie, 'Shanghai Dancers: Gender, Coloniality and the Modern Girl', in *Shadowlines: Women and Borders in Contemporary Asia*, ed. by D Ghosh (New Castle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholar Publishing , 2012), pp. 80–95; Mary I. Ingraham, Joseph K. So, and Roy Moodley, *Opera in a Multicultural World : Coloniality, Culture, Performance* (London: Routledge, 2016).
[81] José-Manuel Barreto, 'Decolonial Thinking and the Quest for Decolonising Human Rights', *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 46.4–5 (2018), 484–502.
[82] Walter D Mignolo, 'The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Colonization and the Discontinuity of the Classical Tradition', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 45.4 (1992), 808–28.
[83] Walter D Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000).
[84] Walter D. Mignolo, 'INTRODUCTION', *Cultural Studies*, 21.2–3 (2007), 155–67.
[85] Walter D Mignolo, Irene Silverblatt, and Sonia Saldívar-hull, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, ed. by W D Mignolo, I Silverblatt, and S Saldivar-Hull (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

world of neoliberalism –a result of the de-Westernisation of the East (which challenged the West's leadership of knowledge, economies and politics) and the movements of decoloniality (which sought to delink local cultures from the colonial matrix of power underlying Western modernity). This prediction or observation has been further elaborated in the following book *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*[86] published in 2018. This roadmap of Mignolo's thinking provides an impeccable conceptual framework for this research, which contextualises the development of CCA in the long process of modernisation of the country and analyses its thriving under the auspices of Western intellectual tradition backed up by the globalised market economics (one-sidedly from the West to 'the rest') in the post-Mao era. As a matter of fact, in the wake of the Chinese Dream – constructed through the Belt and Road Initiative and the Chinese Cultural Renaissance – foreign investments from Western Europe and North America have mostly withdrawn from the market economy of CCA and the so-called national or traditional style began to prevail in the arts and culture of people's everyday lives. In this light, it does create a curiosity to see about 'the end of the coloniality cycle' that resulted from the de-Westernisation (de-coloniality) in CCA.

As mentioned earlier, together with Mignolo there are many other postcolonialists engaging in the debate over the perplexed relationships in the global political, economic and cultural landscape between the West and 'the rest' or between the colonial and imperial powers of Western Europe and North America and the colonised and conquered in South America, Africa and Asia. For instance, Maldonado-Torres has contributed to the concept of coloniality, relating it to the tradition of phenomenology, which on the one hand starting from Heidegger's criticism on race and the colonial experience that follows Nietzsche's frontal attack of modernity, and on the other hand inspires the existentialist thinkers such as Sartre, Husserl, Derrida and Levinas.[87] Others alike include those associated with the Groupe modernité/colonialité (M/C),[88] as anthropologist (Arturo Escobar, Fernando Coronil), literary critic (Javier Sanjinés), philosopher (Enrique Dussel and Sanitago Castro-Gómez) and sociologist (Edgardo Lander). Among them, Quijano seems to be considered as 'having wide repercussions among South American decolonial scholars'.[89] In his article 'Coloniality and modernity/rationality' published in 2007, he claims:

> […] that specific colonial structure of power produced the specific social discriminations which later were codified as 'racial', 'ethnic', 'anthropological' or 'national', according to the times, agents, and populations involved. These intersubjective constructions, product

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[86] Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Duke University Press, 2018).
[87] Maldonado-Torres.
[88] Capucine Boidin and Fátima Hurtado López, 'La Philosophie de La Libération et Le Courant Décolonial', *Cahiers Des Amériques Latines*, 2009, 17–22.
[89] Prem Poddar, Rajeev Patke, and Lars Jensen, *Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures: Continental Europe and Its Empires* (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

> of Eurocentered colonial domination were even assumed to be 'objective', 'scientific', categories, then of a historical significance. That is, as natural phenomena, not referring to the history of power.

This remark resonates with my discussion in section 1.1 on the subject matter of this research (about the semantic confusion among the signifiers relating to CCA as world art, global art, contemporary art, national art, ethnographic art and aboriginal art). It straightforwardly points out an attitude of supremacy shared by some of the art critics or historians in the West towards globalised contemporary art, especially in the anglophone world. It is worth noting that the concept of (de)coloniality has itself received criticism. For example, in the field of comparative education, (de)coloniality is critiqued as positing a dichotomy between Western modernity and non-Western victims and propagating the essentialism and Eurocentrism that it purportedly condemns.[90] In terms of China Studies, postcolonial studies entered China in the 1990s[91] and received enthusiastic scholarly interest in the fields of literature,[92] sinology,[93] history,[94] sociology,[95] feminism,[96] anthropology and politics.[97] Some of the Chinese postcolonialists became sympathetic with aggressive nationalism and received critical remarks in the West, such as being associated with the label of 'nationalist conservatism'.[98] It is worth noting that amid these postcolonial China Studies, a view has emerged which depicts the rising China as a duplicate of Western colonial power. This can be seen in its relation with Africa through economic patronage that operates through a hierarchy of core (the West), semi-periphery (China) and periphery (Africa) among states[99] and its actions towards Tibet, fostering language oppression with practices of erasure of minority languages.[100]

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[90] Edward Vickers, 'Critiquing Coloniality, "Epistemic Violence" and Western Hegemony in Comparative Education – the Dangers of Ahistoricism and Positionality', *Comparative Education*, 56.2 (2020), 165–89.
[91] Kuan Zhang, 'The Dilemma of Postcolonial Criticism in Contemporary China', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 40.1 (2009).
[92] Yiwu (张颐武) Zhang, *Searching in the Periphery (在邊緣處追索：第三世界文化與當代中國文學)* (Beijing: 時代文藝出版社, 1993).
[93] Lydia He Liu, *The Clash of Empires : The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Harvard University Press, 2004).
[94] Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation : Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).; Arif Dirlik, 'Modernity as History: Post-Revolutionary China, Globalization and the Question of Modernity', *Social History*, 27.1 (2002), 16–39.
[95] Wang Ning, 'Postmodernity, Post-Coloniality and Globalisation: A Chinese Perspective', *Social Semiotics*, 10.2 (2000), 221–33.
[96] Tani E Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*, *Next Wave* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
[97] Ip Iam-chong, 'Agony over National–Imperial Identity: Interpreting the Coloniality of the Chinese New Left', *Cultural Dynamics*, 27.2 (2015), 241–52.
[98] Giorgio Strafella, 'Postmodernism as a Nationalist Conservatism? The Case of Zhang Yiwu', *Asiatische Studien - Études Asiatiques*, 70.3 (2016), 921–41.
[99] Alpha Furbell Lisimba and Swati Parashar, 'The "State" of Postcolonial Development: China–Rwanda "Dependency" in Perspective', *Third World Quarterly*, 42.5 (2021), 1105–23 <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2020.1815527>.
[100] Roche.

In addition, scholars like Chen[101] and Dirlik[102] consider that it is China's hegemony that decides the representations of what is Western and of what is traditional inside China. These postcolonial criticisms of China Studies do not, however, cover CCA or art history and art critics, so references to them will be limited in this research.

As mentioned, in addition to the postcolonial criticism of Mignolo, the media theory of McLuhan sets the basic tone of this research. Trained in Cambridge, the Canadian philosopher and communication theorist Marshall McLuhan (1911–1980) proposed two pioneering concepts: the 'global village' in *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* published in 1962 and then 'the medium is the message' in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* in 1964. Coming into the Digital Age, his media theory has become the canon for communication professionals, including scholars, programmers and engineers, especially after 1995 when the digital technology of the World Wide Web was brought to life and his ideas further elaborated by Negroponte (the founder of MIT's Media Lab) in *Being Digital*. Originally, McLuhan's concept that 'the medium is the message' simply meant that the tool (i.e. the channel, device or means) of communication, in addition to delivering the message from the sender to the receiver, contains or embodies in itself a message. The former is the obvious one to be decoded, but the latter is often overlooked and ignored. He said that 'it is only too typical that the content of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium' and 'the scale and form of human association and action' was coined and shaped by the medium per se.[103] He emphasised that the nature of a medium is more important than the meaning or content of the message. This theory expounds in a genuine way that CCA as a medium carries a message in itself. Its (art) content too typically blinds us to the coloniality of it, and the scale and form of the cultural association and action is coined and shaped by it. It is worth noting that in the art world, the term *medium* indicates the material, tools or methods (e.g. painting, sculpture or printmaking) used by an artist to create an artwork. Art in general is considered as a medium for communication. In this light, it is legitimate to use McLuhan's theory and regard contemporary art as an art genre as a medium for communication. So CCA – a group of contemporary artworks made in China or by Chinese artists that share common features (such as geographical or cultural characteristics) – differs from the art made in the West or other regions. As such, it is more than reasonable to combine McLuhan's media theory with Mignolo's postcolonial criticism in setting the conceptual framework for the thesis argument – Chinese contemporary art is the medium is the message, expressing a coloniality of the West in China, a non-Western and formerly semi-colonised country.

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[101] Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002).
[102] Dirlik.
[103] McLuhan. Page 9.

2.2 Theoretical Subareas

Under the main conceptual framework, five theoretical subareas are explored in the research to configure the thesis argument. As mentioned above, they are respectively the concepts and practices of 'foreign direct investment', 'value creation, value added and value chain', 'system of political economy', 'white-cube (way of seeing)' and 'fashion studies'. Mutually related in content and contexts, the first two are directly targeting the market dimension in the making of Chinese contemporary art history, the third and the fourth the politics and the fifth the social relevance (gender). To have a clear view on the use of these sub-theories in the respective work packages of this postcolonial research, a separate account is provided in the following sections.

2.2.1 Foreign (In)Direct Investment (and Network Theory)

Deng's opening-up policy in 1978 unveiled the shift of China from a planned economy to a market economy, a shift which entailed allowing foreign investment and private entrepreneurship. Chinese markets began connecting with international ones, including the art market. In this light, it is essential to apply the concept and practice of foreign (in)direct investment (FiDI) from the field of business management and economics to understand the dynamics and development of China's contemporary art market (or 'art game'). By far, most scholarly concerns in CCA have been preoccupied by the writing of art history per se[104] with a focus on the motifs[105] and the significances[106] of individual artworks. Few have paid attention to the topics of art economics[107] with a special focus on the market performances of CCA.[108]; Fewer still have systematically analysed the actual impact of FiDI, amid the institutional voids in post-Mao China, on the making of a modern infrastructure or ecosystem of an art industry modelled on that of Western Europe and North America – which demonstrates a coloniality spreading to 'the rest' through the globalised market economy in the post-conflict era. According to the International Monetary Fund, FDI as a business concept and practice critical to emerging market countries, is defined as when an individual or business owns ten per cent or more of a foreign company. Nevertheless, the term conventionally means (1) the capital invested in a country that provides manufacturing and service capabilities for both native consumers

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[104] Hung Wu, *Contemporary Chinese Art: A History* (London: Thames Hudson Ltd, 2014); Yan Zhou.
[105] (Gao 2012)
[106] *The Reception of Chinese Art Across Cultures*, ed. by Michelle Huang (Necastle: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2014).
[107] Ruth Towse, *Advanced Introduction to Cultural Economics* (Cheltenham, Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014); Zorloni.
[108] DeBevoise; Annamma Joy and John F Sherry Jr, 'Framing Considerations in the Prc: Creating Value in the Contemporary Chinese Art Market', *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 7.4 (2004), 307–48; Anna Thuring, 'From East to West, from West Ot East - Controversies in Cultural Exchanges', in *Aisan Traditional Theatre and Dance* (Helsinki: Theatre Academy x University of the Arts Helsinki, 2018).

and world markets, (2) investor confidence in a specific business and in the geopolitical climate of the host country, and (3) connecting to national economies and benefiting both the capital suppliers and the host regions. According to the World Bank, FDI has increased drastically in the post-conflict era with the expansion of global markets into those countries that were formerly behind the Iron Curtain. To this day, China has been one of biggest recipients of FDI in its many business sectors, including CCA. Although information about art deals is typically non-transparent and the conduct of business confidential, it is evident that the influx of FiDI from advanced countries after 1978 (and especially after 1989) has largely contributed to the rapid development of a Chinese market economy of arts and culture. Appling the concept of FiDI to approach and analyse the art game of CCA helps to bring new insights, crucial to decoding the 'Chinese contemporary art is the medium is the message of coloniality'. To have a holistic view on how FiDI results in the cultural phenomenon of coloniality, the network theory of Bruno Latour[109] is also employed. By connecting the actor-agents of FiDI in the art game of CCA, it is made explicit that centred with those (with a direct or indirect presence) from the West are local ones as well. Examining the dominant position of the West in these collaborations, especially between 1978 and 2012, the ambiguous attitude of the Chinese government between laissez-faire and state-controlled towards the development of CCA is identified. This may construe a power struggle between the West and China in politics, economy and arts and culture in the contemporary era driven by market neoliberalism. While the former represents a hegemony in defining, orienting and promoting the universal norms and value through contemporary art, the latter shows a resistance in negotiating, diverging and counterbalancing the former's supremacy. Such a full-scale attempt is made explicit by the Chinese Dream, announced in 2012, which in addition to the Belt and Road Initiative includes a domestic cultural policy under the name of the Chinese Cultural Renaissance to openly promote a traditional style surpassing the Western one in the arts and culture of people's everyday lives. According to Mignolo's theory, this policy could be understood as an act of decoloniality or delinking.

2.2.2 Value Theory

At the core of contemporary art game is the definition, creation and delivery of value. Cultural economists suggest that there are two kinds of value in art, the 'use value' and the 'non-use value'.[110] The former indicates the market value and the latter historical or cultural value.[111] To pursue this further, the concept and practice of 'value creation', 'value added' and 'value chain' is applied to investigate the emerging art economy in post-Mao China. To identify the mechanism of value configured in the infrastructure or ecosystem of the art

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[109] B Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, *Politica y Sociedad*, 2006, XLIII.
[110] David Throsby, '2006-Paying for the Past: Economics, Cultural Heritage, and Public Policy', in *Australia's Economy in Its International Context*, ed. by Kym Anderson (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 2012), II.
[111] Victor and Ginsburgh.

industry, that is. In actuality, the term 'value creation (or value proposition)' is devised in the conceptual framework of marketing strategy, originally referring to the product value a company promises to deliver to customers.[112] 'Value added' means the economic enhancement a company gives its products or services before offering them to customers. It is mostly used to explain why the product or service can be sold for more than it costs to produce it.[113] The term 'value chain' indicates a set of activities a company operates with efficiency in transforming a product or service to deliver the most value for the least possible cost.[114] This set of concepts is used in a loosely structured way in the research to examine how the value of Chinese contemporary art (or any art) is proposed, increased and delivered from an artist's studio to commercial gallery, dealer, auction house, collector-investor, buyer of art funds and museum storage. This process is often accomplished through a series of non-commercial operations, including curatorship, exhibition making and/or various art writing (such as art critique, comment or promotional text), on the occasion of art award, art competition, art fair, art festival, biennale or (temporary and permanent) museum exhibition. From a process point of view, all these (co-/in-)dependent art related events or businesses are the chained components of an ecosystem or infrastructure of art industry in which an empty canvas goes from the factory of art material supplier to the basement of national art museum with 'value' exponentially produced, added and delivered. It is worth noting that such 'market value' of an artwork is supposed to correspond to its 'artistic (philosophy) value'. Given the nature of democratic capitalism or market democracy, I suggest adding the 'social value' to the current ranking system of Chinese contemporary art performed by major media companies or art authorities in China and abroad.

2.2.3 Political Economy

Provided that the current literature of arts economics focuses mainly on the societies of democratic capitalism (in the Anglo-American style) and a comparative study is achieved between the art markets in East Asia (China, Korea and Taiwan),[115] it is imperative to pursue further the inquiry on the relationship between various systems of political economy and the development of contemporary art. To find out whether alternatives exist for the development of CCA after 1978 in an emerging market society much influenced by the globalised Anglo-American social model, the theory of political economy is employed to inspect the use of (contemporary) art in the socioeconomic convention of a welfare state – marked by an emphasis on maximising labour force participation, promoting gender equality, egalitarian and extensive benefit level, the large magnitude of income redistribution and liberal use of

[112] Robert S Kaplan and Davd P Norton, *Strategy Maps: Converting Intangible Assets into Tangible Outcomes* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004).
[113] Paul Samuelson and William Nordhaus, *Economics* (McGraw-Hill, 1948).
[114] Michael Porter, *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985).
[115] Robertson.

expansionary fiscal policy. Originating from moral philosophy in the 18th century, the term 'political economy' refers to the mechanism of production and trade in relation to law, custom and government (including the distribution of national income and wealth).[116] It represents an interdisciplinary study field of economics, sociology and political science, and seeks to explain how political institutions and economic systems (capitalist, socialist, communist or mixed) influence each other. Presumably, the development of (contemporary) art, especially in relation to society at large, should differ from one system of political economy to another. For example, the market economies in Britain or the United States, the mixed economies in continental Europe or the planned economies in the communist China. As the booming economy of CCA was the result of the radical transition of the country from state-controlled communist economy to a market ones, the concept of political economy should be an important reference for identifying the role of politics in determining the making and consumption of (contemporary) art. The findings should help to (re-)calibrate the current version of the art game in contemporary China and elsewhere.

2.2.4 White-Cube (Way of Seeing)

Another discernible impact factor of (national and international) politics on the development and globalisation of contemporary art is embodied in the 'way of seeing', a question that involves diverse intellectual, social and cultural traditions and is layered with direct and indirect administrative or political decisions in various degrees towards the arts and culture. To approach this grand topic, the white-cube theory of *muséographie* (a French term to indicate exhibition design and curatorial practice) is applied to examine the phenomenological performance of coloniality in the milieu of museum exhibition. Following the critical theory of semiotics in the tradition of Frankfort School, the way of seeing (an artwork) one processes is in actuality an epistemic activity that operates within a specific conceptual framework, built with inputs of particular signs. A sign will achieve signification only when the signifier and the signified are in the same set or loop of a historic-social-cultural (referential) system. In this light, evaluating the exhibition design (muséographie) of (contemporary) art display in the milieu of exhibitions should provide a direct and empirical way to understand the meaning-making process of an (contemporary) artwork while it is exhibited to the public. Although there is already extensive discussion on the decontextualisation of museum collection[117] and the postcolonial museology,[118]

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[116] Vincent Bladen, *An Introduction to Political Economy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).
[117] Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Michigan: The University of Michigan: Smithsonian Books, 1991); David Dean, *Museum Exhibition* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
[118] MacLeod, 'Postcolonialism and Museum Knowledge: Revisiting the Museums of the Pacific', *Pacific Science*, 52.4 (1998), 308–18; Iain Chambers and others, *The Postcolonial Museum: The Arts of Memory and the Pressures of History* (London, 2016); M Tlostanova, *Decolonizing the Museum. Postcolonialism and Postsocialism in Fiction and Art: Resistance and Re-Existence* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Bruno Brulon Soares and Anna Leshchenko,

this research pursues the question of international politics and the way of seeing art by an innovative study on the 'visualised' phenomenon of a 'museum coloniality' embodied by the white-cube exhibition format – a style of interior architecture invented by the Bauhaus school in the early 20th century in Germany to give modernity a physical form.[119] Appropriated by the Nazi government to display propaganda art in the 1940s and globalised to the rest of the world in the following decades, the white cube physically manifests a formal, ideological and intellectual coloniality by presenting the art of the Other, first in the West and then in the non-Western worlds (especially the former colonies or semi-colonies and current developing countries) in pursuit of modernity.

2.2.5 Fashion Studies

To further explore the social dimension of CCA, the topic of gender – women and their art and/or feminist art, to be precise – in China serves as an important theme for the case study. Instead of the typical methods (such as biography, history, qualitative studies, art critique or sociological intervention) used to investigate feminist art, this research applies a novel approach by using the theory of fashion studies to explore the role of women and their art in general in the making of modern Chinese (art) history. As culture does not change (or modernise) overnight by radical revolution and tradition tends to survive political ideology and government propaganda, historical research is required to understand the current problem of gender equality in the Chinese contemporary art world. One efficient way is to study the look and image or imagery of women and their art presented in the Chinese visual art in the modern times. In fashion studies, it is assumed that clothing, the layer right next to our skin, is an important component of one's image – thus a milieu of contested ideologies. In addition to providing protection for the body, this layer is also a means to carry out a material and visual communication of one's personal identity (from the inner world, personality), negotiated or compromised with the collective norms and value (from the outer world, society).[120] As Quentin says that 'the fabric is a natural extension of the body or even the soul',[121] the fashioned look or image of women in the arts of modern China can be regarded as an (in)tangible 'contact zone' between the Western and Chinese cultural systems. This approach is especially useful towards understanding the question of gender equality or women rights at a time when the 'second sex' were restricted from the making of Chinese art and history.

'Museology in Colonial Contexts: A Call for Decolonisation of Museum Theory', *ICOFOM Study Series*, 46.The politics and poetics of museology (2018), 61–79.

[119] B O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, 1976; C Klonk, 'Myth and Reality of the White Cube', in *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*, ed. by Murawska-Muthesius and Piotrowski (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); Elena Filipovic, 'The Global White Cube', *On Curating*, Politics o.22 (2014), 63–84.

[120] Cecelia Watson, 'The Sartorial Self: William James's Philosophy of Dress', *History of Psychology*, 7.3 (2004), 211–24; Eugenia Paulicelli and Hazel Clark, *The Fabric of Cultures: Fashion, Identity and Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

[121] Quentin Bell, *On Human Finery* (The Hogarth Press Ltd, 1976), page 9.

2.3 Theory Synthesis

This discussion has made it explicit that the theoretical backbone of this research on the darker side of contemporary art in China is a combination of media theory (the medium is the message) and postcolonial theory (coloniality). To study the three key factors in the making of China's contemporary art history – market, politics, gender (social relevance) – five sub-theoretical areas are explored: 'foreign investment', 'valorisation' (value creation, value added and value chain), 'political economy', 'white-cube' (way of seeing) and 'fashion theory'.

Before structuring the research design around such a conceptual framework, it has been particularly taken into account whether it is appropriate to apply the postcolonial theory of '(de)coloniality' to approach Chinese contemporary art (CCA). After all, the settler society the theory originally aimed to investigate does not exist in China, which has never been entirely colonised by the West as South America, South and Southeast Asia and Africa have. The country has made a painstaking effort to remain independent during the Age of New Imperialism without entirely losing its sovereignty despite struggling with extensive wars and sociopolitical turmoil. The often significant racial issues between the (white) coloniser and the (coloured) colonised indigenous peoples did not occur in China, nor did what has been described by the postcolonialists, where the intellectual, cultural and artistic norms and values originating from the post-Renaissance tradition and brought from Europe to 'colonise (modernise)' the (coloured) colonised peoples in the New World[122] by the (white) colonisers or settlers like sailors, merchants, priests or soldiers. These Western emigrants have achieved a total victory with the (coloured) colonised native peoples being killed, slaved and ruled under their white supremacy. As introduced here, 'modernisation' in China (starting from the mid-19th century) has been a self-aware, selective and progressive movement, mostly directed and implemented by top-down government policies covering first military technology then the political system and arts and culture. Criticism of the hierarchical relationship between the metropole and the colony (centre and border or periphery) – identified in the Americas, South and Southeast Asia and Africa by the postcolonialists – could be regarded as somewhat unfit to describe the Sino–West cultural relations when compared with the radical expansion of European colonisation. In the Chinese context (as a semi-colonised state), modernisation has always been a bipolar power struggle between the Western and the Chinese systems. Along this line of thinking, there has been a theoretical consideration based on the comparison between two sets of concepts: the postcolonial ones as 'modernity', 'postcoloniality' and '(de)coloniality' prevailing in cultural studies; and the anthropological ones as 'acculturation', 'deculturation', 'transculturation' and 'interculturality' used commonly in cultural and social anthropology (or 'cultural translation' in sociology) when discussing the shifting style of arts (and literature)

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[122] Jared M Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (WW Norton & Company, 1999).

– for example, from modernism to postmodernism, post-structuralism or deconstructionism. It seems that in the universe of meanings, what the signified (meaning) indicated by the signifier (terminology) in postcolonialism are translatable to the one in anthropology to describe the situation or process of cultural (mis)appropriation yielded from the contact zone between the West and 'the rest' (the colonised, non-Western worlds), as seen in the anglophone and francophone literature. However, the line between the West and 'the rest' is often found to be diluted, blurred or erased in the anthropological or sociological discussions (this somehow fits with the criticism of Quijano quoted in Chapter 2.1). In addition, by taking on the five subarea studies to understand the three key subjects of CCA – especially the analysis of foreign investments in CCA, the relationship between systems of political economy and use of (contemporary) art and the visual manifestation of coloniality via the white cube – it is made explicit that the critical theory of (de)coloniality is appropriate to constitute the thesis argument.

Although it is to be further pursued, the (dis)similarities of norms and values between the Western and the Chinese cultural systems (facing the political, economic and social impacts of colonisation and/or globalisation[123]), to identify 'CCA is the medium is the message' remains legitimate as the core mission of this research. Eventually, entangled history also includes art history and CCA is still alien to most Chinese audiences. Being a West-originated art genre, the content of which (theme, concept and meaning) should surpass form, 'contemporary art' is a veritable medium – a platform or channel of mass communication. According to the aforementioned media theory 'the medium is the message', the spreading of contemporary art to China as CCA contains and delivers a message, embodied in both the content and form of contemporary art, which can be decoded and analysed in negotiation with the postcolonial concept of (de)coloniality.

[123] Walter D Mignolo, 'Decoloniality and Phenomenology: The Geopolitics of Knowing and Epistemic/Ontological Colonial Differences', *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 32.3 (2018), 360.

3 RESULTS

The findings and results of the five independent and interrelated research tasks (on foreign investment, valorisation, political economy, ways of seeing and gender equality) covering the three key factors of art history (market, politics and gender) under the research scope of postcolonialism have been respectively included in the discussions at international conferences and published with conference proceedings and international journals. In a thematic order according to the thesis's conceptual structure, they can be grouped into five pairs in the following report:

1) About Ai Weiwei and Uli Sigg and the actor-agent network of CCA industry:
    - The working paper 'A Semiotic Reading of the Sunflower Seeds' presented at the *8th International Conference of Arts and Society* held in Budapest in 2013; and
    - The article 'Foreign (In)Direct Investment in Chinese Contemporary Art Game: The Case Studies of Uli Sigg and Guy Ullens and Beyond, 1989-2013' published by the *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society.*
2) The process of 'valorisation' and the suggestion of an improved ranking system:
    - The working paper 'Understanding the Ranking of Chinese Contemporary Art' [124] presented at the *34th quadrennial world congress of Commitée internationale d'hIstoire de l'art* (CIHA) under the Conseil international de la philosophie et des sciences humaines (CIPSH) of UNESCO-UN held in Beijing in 2016; and published in the conference proceedings *Terms: Session 2. The Rank of Art* (pp. 173–179).[125]

[124] Presented in English and published in Chinese as '解析中国当代艺术排名及另类三维排行机制之可能性探讨'.

[125] The paper published in the conference proceedings is in simplified Chinese, the language of the conference hosting country, China.

3) About the relationship between the system of political economy and the use of (contemporary) art:
    - The working paper 'Turning Right / Turning Left? A Neoclassical Socio-economic Query of the Arts in Finland' presented at the *41st International Conference of Social Theory, Politics and the Arts* (STP&A) held in Adelaide in 2015; and
    - The article 'Turning Right / Turning Left? A Neoclassical Socio-economic Query of Art Institutes in Finland' published by the *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society* (46:4, 164–176).
4) To tackle the cultural phenomenon of coloniality in China:
    - The working paper 'Displaying Asian Arts in Whitened Context: The Case Study of Musée Guimet' presented at the *106th Annual Conference of the College Art Association* (CAA) held in Los Angeles in 2018; and
    - The article 'Museum Coloniality: Displaying Asian Art in the Whitened Context' published by the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*.
5) On the question of gender equality in the art world of modern China:
    - The working paper 'Modernity in Women Fashion and Art History of the 20th Century China' was presented at the *42nd Annual Conference of the Association of Art Historians* (AAH) held in Edinburg in 2016; and
    - The article 'Fashioning Chinese Feminism: Women and Their Art in the Modernising China' (accept with revision by the *Journal of Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty*).

Selected from such extensive and diverse findings for the composition of this thesis are only the parts that are essential to the thesis statement 'Chinese contemporary art is the medium is the message of coloniality' (as seen in the articles attached in the Appendix).

As mentioned in section 1.3, included in this thesis from the first study resulting in two papers (on Ai Weiwei and Uli Sigg and the actor-agent network of their art enterprise) is the part critical to the question of foreign investment in CCA, which covers the key elements of art history as market and politics; from the second (on the ranking system of CCA) to process of valorisation in art industry, market and social relevance; from the third (on the use of art in a welfare society) to the relationship between systems of political economy and use of art, market and politics; from the fourth (on displaying the art of the Other) to the visual manifestation of coloniality, (international and national) politics; and from the fifth (on women and their art in the art history of modern China) to the social relevance of CCA, politics and gender.

3.1 The Chinese Contemporary 'Art Game'

Conclusively, the grammar of the Chinese contemporary 'art game' is best demonstrated by the intervention of foreign direct and indirect investments in the emerging art economy of post-Mao China and the market mechanism of valorisation in Chinese contemporary art (CCA). It concretely elucidates how the coloniality of the West penetrates into China after the Cold War through the globalised market economics of neoliberalism, and hinted at the gesture of the Chinese government to de-link from the Western hegemony in Chinese art. In the first article 'Foreign (In)Direct Investment in Chinese Contemporary Art Game: The Case Studies of Uli Sigg and Guy Ullens and Beyond, 1989-2013', the discussion about the business model and the actor-agent network of (in)direct foreign investments in CCA, with a focus on the critical timeframe between the opening-up policy of Deng and the rise of the Chinese Dream of Xi, makes it clear how CCA is bridged to and endorsed by the international art markets (oriented mainly towards a group of white-elite-male investor-collectors from Western Europe and North America). The art game of theirs involved local agents, though contributes to the building of a Chinese infrastructure for the contemporary art industry, It therefore has a dominant influence on the development of CCA, not only in form but also in content. In the second article 'Understanding the Ranking of Chinese Contemporary Art', the study of how the value of CCA is proposed, added and delivered through an infrastructure (in-the-making) – a market system configured by a series of directly or indirectly connected businesses in the art industry – which originated from the industrialised society of democratic capitalism in Western Europe and North America. These two articles serve as a solid foundation in revealing the darker side of Chinese contemporary art market.

3.1.1 Global Market, Foreign Investment, Emerging Economy

The success of Western patron-investor-collectors in CCA during the transitioning period, where China emerged from being an agriculture based society to the world's factory and an industrial powerhouse, provides an explicit picture of how globalisation or the globalised neoliberal market economics dominated by the West has conquered post-Mao China. The article 'Foreign (In)Direct Investment in Chinese Contemporary Art Game: The Case Study of Uli Sigg, Guy Ullens and Beyond, 1989–2013'[126] employs an in-depth case study on the actor-agent network of the Chinese contemporary art game centred around Western art powers to delineate the landscape of a cultural phenomenon which resonates with the postcolonial criticism of coloniality and is tagged as neo-colonisation by some scholars. In identifying the business model of foreign art investors, it is found that local professionals (including the nouveau riche as

[126] Keywords: art economy, ecosystem (infrastructure) of art industry, foreign (in)direct investment, Saatchi model, Uli Sigg, Guy Ullens, Chinese contemporary art, global art market, national heritage process, art game.

collectors or investors) strive to 'catch up' with the world (the West) by participating, co-playing and even taking over the art game.

Applying a quasi-biographical method, the article reports on the two success stories of the most important CCA's patron-collector-investors – the self-made man Uli Sigg (1946–) from Switzerland and the multimillionaire Baron Guy Ullens (1935–) from Belgium. They share much in common regarding what they have achieved approximately between 1978 and 2013, after the social reforms of Deng and before the Chinese Dream of Xi, when China experienced unprecedented economic growth that amazed the world. It was a time when foreign investments played a key role in such development with important contributions in capital, know-how and technology in exchange for an immense Chinese market and high return of investment. This is manifested in many business sectors, especially the core ones relating to the country's hard power. The two oligarchs of CCA, Sigg and Ullens, as discussed in the article, are in actuality leading figures in making business with and in the newly opened post-Mao China. Such experience brought them profound knowledge about and close relationship with Chinese authorities, which became the foundation of their transnational art enterprise. Forming a driving force for the establishment of a market-oriented ecosystem or infrastructure of the (contemporary) art industry in China, they adopted the Saatchi model of the art business or (art game) – a methodology similar to the market or stock investment strategy of buying low and selling high – invented or pioneered by Charles Saatchi in the UK[127] for the art of young British artists (which in his hands became the art brand YBA) as the first target. Coming from outside of China, both Sigg and Ullens employed so-called proxy agents – meaning they worked in close collaboration with local CCA experts, not only those that are native to Chinese but those also familiar with the Western world. For Sigg, it was Ai Weiwei (1957–), a returnee from New York who strived to have an art career in Beijing. For Ullens, this proxy was Fei Dawei (1954–), an art historian who graduated from CAFA and living in Paris. These collaborations began around the same time in the mid-1990s. Within about fifteen years, they achieved great success with a high return of investment. In addition to earning capital gains, their Chinese contemporary art entrepreneurship directly contributed to the building of an ecosystem (or infrastructure) for the art industry based on the Anglo-American model of a neoliberal market economy. One noticeable difference between Sigg and Ullens is in the formulas of valorisation they utilised in the art game. Sigg's approach was a classic one: he set up a prestigious (non-governmental) art award in China and organised museum tour exhibitions in the West to increase the value of his collection. Yet the one adopted by Ullens appears to be an upgraded version with a cutting-edge marketing strategy: juxtaposing art exhibitions with high-end fashion shows and entertainment business (movidom) to brand his collection as exquisite luxury goods.

[127] The formula of the 'Saatchi model' to generate return of investment (ROI) appears to be artless: hoarding little known artworks from artist studios or the first market, exhibiting them in established museums and then selling them monopolistically by groups or as a whole in the second market. See Article I in the Appendix.

This summary was built from semi-biographical studies of Sigg and Ullens (as well as of Ai Weiwei and Fei Dawei) presented in the article. As a matter of fact, Sigg is the one who achieved the very first industrial joint venture between Switzerland and China in 1980. In the belief that 'China needed an example to tell the world that investing capital and technology is viable',[128] he met up with Deng himself for the deal. Yet it is not until 1995 that he cast his eye on CCA, when he entered the realm of politics (being the ambassador of Switzerland) and met Ai Weiwei. Instead of buying from the commercial galleries in Hong Kong or Europe as other early collectors of CCA, Sigg frequented the artists' studios and bought directly from them, just as Saatchi did with YBA. By 2010, he had become acquainted with more than 1,000 artists and amassed about 2,000 artworks[129] in the proclamation 'to build a documentary-like collection, to promote CCA with tour exhibitions abroad and to complete the ecosystem or infrastructure of Chinese art industry'.[130] In addition to being a founding president of the Swiss Chinese Chamber of Commerce (in 1980) and the venture capital company Asia Pacific, Sigg was also a board member of diverse businesses in the sectors of media (the Ringier), industry (the Vitra), finance (the China Development Bank) and art (the International Council of MoMA, the International Advisory Council of Tate Gallery and the Musée Guimet).[131] The shared journey of Sigg and Ai Weiwei, approximately from 1995 to 2010, provides a clear demonstration of how foreign (in)direct investments works with local art professionals to initiate and boost an art economy in a developing country with a high ROI. In 1998, Sigg founded the Chinese Contemporary Art Award (CCAA) in Beijing and by inviting its jury built a transbordering expert network. For example, the first CCAA invited Harald Szeemann (and Ai), the artistic director of the 48th Venice Biennale (also of the 49th), who for the first time included CCA in the longstanding biennale. Through Sigg, Ai was connected with Bernhard Fibicher (the director of Bern Kunsthalle), Hans Ulrich Obrist (the artistic curator of Serpentine Gallery) and the Swiss architect Herzog and de Meuron (for the 2008 Olympic stadium project) – Fibicher hosted the very first solo show of Ai in 2004, Obrist began to write about Ai extensively and Herzog and de Meuron engaged Ai in their stadium project for the Beijing Olympics in 2008. In addition to helping building Sigg's collection, in 2005 Ai served as co-curator for the exhibition *Mahjong* (based on Sigg's collection), which toured at the Kunstmuseum Bern, Hamburg Kunsthalle, Fundació Joan Miró (Barcelona), USC Berkeley Art Museum and Peabody Essex Museum (Massachusetts). In 2007, Sigg introduced Ai to Ruth Noark, who included Ai's *Fairytale* in *Documenta 12*.[132]

[128] Nian (峻念) Jun, 'Mr. Sigg's Adventurous Life in China (希克先生的中國冒險生活)', *The Stand News (立場新聞)*, 10 April 2018.
[129] (Liu 2018)
[130] Jieshu (朱潔樹) Zu, 'Behind the Clearance Sale of Western Collectors (西方收藏家清倉中國當代藝術的背後)', 東方早報, 5 June 2012.
[131] (Li 2012)
[132] Ling Zhu, 'Ai Weiwei-Kein Wirklicher Regimekritiker', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung AG*, 12 May 2011. This project was sponsored by the gallerist Urs Miele, who made a deal with two financial funds in Switzerland under the agreement that the loan should be returned with interests when the market price of Ai's art increased.

In 2009, Chris Dercon (jury of CCAA in 2006 and 2008) held a solo show for Ai in the Kunsthalle in Munich. In 2010, Ai's solo *Sunflower Seeds* was displayed at Tate Modern (where Sigg was a member of the International Council). Right after the show, those porcelain sunflower seeds were made available in the second market with the first pile (100 kilograms) being auctioned by Sotheby's for USD 56,000.[133] Just when the art of Ai reached its highest market price, Sigg began to find ways to 'return his collection back to China'.[134] In 2012, Sigg concluded a deal with the government of Hong Kong (instead of Beijing or Shanghai), which agreed to buy 47 fine pieces for USD 22.9 million and to receive another 1,463 'educational' pieces as a donation (with an estimated value of USD 170 million according to Sotheby's).[135]

In 1995, Baron Guy Ullens began to add CCA to his collecting list, which had been marked by classic taste for those antiquarians in the Belle Époque. It was when his business Artal Group Luxemburg completed a FDI through establishing the company Mankattan in Shanghai. Buying firstly from private galleries in Hong Kong and Europe, Ullens organised in 2002 the exhibition *Paris-Pekin: The Private Collection of Myriam and Guy Ullens* (with 120 pieces) at the Espace Cardin in Paris. At the same time, he started a close collaboration with Fei – who became the director of the Foundation Guy & Myriam Ullens (registered in Switzerland and headquartered in Paris). In addition to providing consultancy for his collecting and sponsoring relevant exhibition (for example, China's very first national pavilion in *Venice Biennale*), Fei set out to build a 'warehouse' inside China – which turned out to be a kunsthalle-like space. Between 2003 and 2007, about 1,700 pieces were purchased by Ullens's foundation.[136] In November 2007, under the presence of Prince of the Belgians Philippe Léopold Louis Marie, the kunsthalle-like space the Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art (UCCA) was inaugurated in the 798 Contemporary Art District in Beijing, with the opening exhibition curated by Fei – *'85 New Wave: The Birth of Chinese Contemporary Art*. But after four months, Jérôrme Sans (the former co-founder of Palais de Tokyo) replaced Fei. On the day of the Olympic opening ceremony, Sans greeted the public with *A Dialogue of Norman Foster and Ai Weiwei* and a special exhibition *Our Future: The Guy & Myriam Ullens Foundation Collection* to assert 'Ullens's long-term commitment to Chinese artists'.[137] The following special exhibition *Christian Dior and Chinese Artists* turned the exhibition room of UCCA into a futuristic movie setting, designed by Timmy Yip Kam-Tim, the renowned art director and designer for fiction films from Hong Kong. More than 100 Dior Couture pieces were sent from Paris to bring glamour to UCCA with a 'dialogue between contemporary art and fashion'. The red carpet gala dinner was joined by top celebrities from around the world, including Charlize Theron, Marion Cotillard

[133] Carol Vogel, 'A Mountain of Ai Weiwei's Sunflower Seeds Sells for 560,000 USD', *The New York Times* (New York, 15 February 2011).
[134] (Li 2012)
[135] (Balfour 2012; Li 2012)
[136] Yuan (謝媛) Xie, 'Fei Dawei: Things with Ullens (費大為：與尤倫斯不得不說的事)', 藝術財經, October 2011.
[137] UCCA, 'Our Future: The Guy & Myriam Ullens Foundation Collection 2008.7.19-2008.10.12', *UCCA*, 2008.

and Evan Green. This sudden change of UCCA from being 'academic' to 'commercial' (entertaining) was the result of the abrupt change of organisational mission from non-profit kunsthalle to for-profit art business by the sudden decision of Ullens – to reset the financial targets of UCCA as moving the breakeven point from 2003 to 2010, meaning that by the end of 2009 UCCA had to generate EUR 6 million annually.[138] Although claiming to be a non-profit organisation, UCCA in actuality was registered as a for-profit company in China all along. Around 2010, almost at the same time when Sigg began returning artworks to China, Ullens announced his wish to sell both his collections (owned by his foundation) and UCCA (the exhibition venue). In 2011, the first group of 106 pieces were sold at Sotheby's Hong Kong. In 2016, a deal for UCCA was concluded for RMB 100 million with a group of local investors, including Future Edutainment (under Lunar Capital) and Focus Media. From 2009 to 2017, nine auction sales of Ullens's Chinese collection were sold at auctions like the Poly or Sotheby's with significant ROI: in 2009 a Chen Yifei was sold for RMB 40,432,000 and a Wu Bing for RMB 16.9 million; in 2011 a Chang Xiaogang for HKD 79,060,000; and in 2013 a Zheng Fezhi for HKD 180 million[139].

In profiling these two oligarchs of CCA, the existence of an art industry network (centred around them) was identified. This network incorporated the key actor-agents such as dealers, galleries, auction houses, art critics, journalists, publishers, museum curators, art funds managers and venture capitalists. Through these, direct or indirect foreign investments of different sizes flooded mainland China from the West and the advanced neighbouring areas, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Singapore. In actuality, Sigg and Ullens served as two prominent flagships in the art economy of CCA. The most important criterion for the success of their art game is to attract the better short-term players (so the average market price of CCA can be driven high). The leading ones are those from Western Europe and North America, including Christopher Tsai, Fritz Kaiser, John Fernandez, Sylvain and Dominique Levy, Michael Gagosian, Howard Farber, William Acquavella and Charles Saatchi, the inventor or pioneer of the Saatchi model. Once the market heated up and prices rose in the late 2000s, these FiDI of CCA cashed out on the local buyers who followed the market trend. It is under such circumstances that some of the nouveau riche collectors of CCA began to 'museumify' their holdings, and a museum boom occurred. For instance, Wei and Liu Yiqian created the Long Museum in 2012, Wang, Lu Jun the Sifang Art Museum and Adrian Cheng the K11 art foundation and art spaces in 2013, Wang Zongjun the Song Art Museum, and Zheng Hao the How Museum in 2017.

The research findings and results presented in the article demonstrate an explicit picture of how the West's opinion of contemporary art, represented by Sigg and Ullens, has played a dominant role in the development of CCA through the globalised market economy after the Cold War in the interval of China's

[138] Chris Gill, 'Conveyor Belt of Directors Continues as Teh World Wonders, What Is Going on at the Ullens Center in Beijing?', *The Art Newspaper*, 1 June 2008.
[139] (Gao 2017)

shifting from a planned economy to a market economy and rising to the status of global power. This exemplifies the coloniality in the Chinese contemporary art world in the face of non-official presence or administration of the West. It also suggests some kind of internalisation of the mechanism of a coloniality from the West, as the art game was joined by local players and the infrastructure of the contemporary art industry was left as well to further develop in the hands of local professionals. It is worth noting that the retreat of FiDI in CCA at the end of the 2010s may be as a result of a de-linking or de-coloniality gesture of the Chinese government, which for example has refused to buy back the collections of Sigg and has issued a new cultural policy to promote traditional art in 2012 as the Chinese Cultural Renaissance under the national strategy of Chinese Dream.

3.1.2 Valorisation in the Art Industry

In addition to studying the grammar of the Chinese contemporary art game from the macro point of view, the second article 'Understanding the Ranking of Chinese Contemporary Art', includes a painstaking analysis of the valorisation of CCA. Considering the emerging culture of the so-called art listicle (modelled on the billboard marketing strategy of entertainment industry), the article discusses the lack of social value in the current ranking system of CCA, which measures only the market value and artistic value – the two closely related and intertwined variants for price determination and often prompting artificial manipulation due to the to-be-identified characteristics of avant-garde contemporary art. To explore the concepts and practice of value in contemporary art, the business management concept of 'value proposition', 'value added' and 'value chain' are applied. In spite of the discussions on the relationship between art and market in cultural economics (where the market performance of CCA is often emphasised),[140] a thorough investigation on the value of contemporary art has remained rare. This paper should bridge this knowledge gap and provide a clear picture on the marketisation (or Westernisation) of art making in CCA. By embracing the globalised market dominated by Western art powers with an art content the market favours, CCA becomes a useful tool for the promotion of universal norms and value. This could be understood as a sign of coloniality for the postcolonial observation of globalisation or neo-colonialism.

This sub-study started with a common belief that the market value relies on the artistic value of an art piece and it makes the academic work of art criticism essential. (This explains the strategy of Sigg's setting up an art award in China and touring his collection to the university museums in the West). As mentioned in section 1.1, the concept of fine art is a modern phenomenon achieved by an anonymous art market in response to the growing middle class of a consumer society after the Industrial Revolution. Before that, art had served either religion or aristocracy. In this light, the market value of art should relate to various social systems. However, the artistic value is mostly determined by the intellectual

[140] Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

tradition of a specific culture. In the West, defining artistic value can be traced back to the rhetoric and poetry of Plato, the patronage of the arts in Renaissance Italy, the role of Principal Painter in Ordinary to the King or Queen of England, and in the art collections that were part of cabinets of curiosities. However, the Chinese tradition employed a different aesthetic system, for example, in the Chinese art theory of Xie He in the 6th century and the 'literati painting' in the Song dynasty (960–1276 AD). Such an artistic divide between the Western and the Chinese cultural systems therefore generates an epistemological space for the valorisation of CCA to be made. With the artistic value of CCA being an issue yet to be settled with respect to China's traditional aesthetics and philosophy, the market value of it becomes an easy target to deploy as it suffices simply to follow a few business strategies as seen in the art market economy of the Anglo-American style.

In the Digital Age, the power dynamics between art and the market behind the canvas becomes visible, because the previously implicit or hidden art game co-played by various actor-agents (artists, dealers, critics, curators or collectors) of the art business chain is made tracible and quantifiable. One example is the emergence of listicles in CCA, as explored in the article. In recent years, the billboard culture[141] (appropriated from the media and entertainment business) came into China's art world and frequently occupied newspaper headlines. The leading art lists of CCA includes the international ones like the Annual List of Power 100 (made by the Art Review from the UK), Forbes, Forbes China and Artsy's Annual Artist Ranking, and local ones such as the Hurun Art List China, AMI Annual Ranking of Chinese Art and Annual Fortune Ranking of Chinese Authors. Theoretically speaking, listing (ranking) includes reasoning that hierarchises a 'relative position, value, worth, complexity, power, importance, authority and level' of selected items within a specific system, compares them and puts them in order. To date, it has remained unknown whether these listings of CCA have engaged in thoughtful works of art epistemology, critique or philosophy. What is known is the following: (1) they were made by media companies, (2) under the sponsorships of financial institutions, (3) the committee members or jury were anonymous, (4) the technical details were not revealed, and (5) the criteria of selection remained unclarified. Judging by such observation, these listings served as a mere promotion tool for the sake of the market only.

To decode the marketing game of such art listicles, it is essential to analyse the process of value proposition, value added and value chain in the contemporary art industry and economy, the so-called art world. From a structuralist point of view, the industry is composed of various units which can be grouped into three major clusters (Figure 4): (1) art education – fine art, design or media; (2) art authority – art criticism and journalism, art centres, museums, biennales, art awards, art festivals, art foundations and publishing houses; and (3) the art market – commercial galleries, auction houses, art studios, dealers,

[141] N Anand, 'Charting the Music Business: Billboard Magazine and the Development of the Commercial Music Field', in *The Business of Culture: Strategic Perspectives on Entertainment and Media*, ed. by Joseph Lampel, Jamal Shamsie, and Theresa K Lant (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), pp. 139–54.

investors and funds. The various components or stakeholders of these three clusters form a market-oriented ecosystem or infrastructure of the art economy. Building such a market business chain for the art industry has taken a few centuries in the West, but only a few dozen years in post-Mao China (from approximately the mid-1990s throughout the 2000s to date).

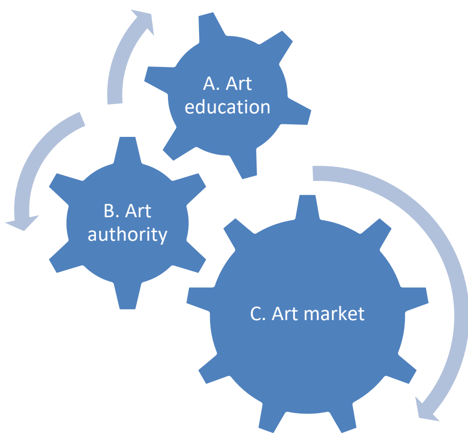

Figure 5 A market-oriented ecosystem of contemporary art game

A brief study of the business models of various units in the three clusters (the actor-agents of the art world) will elucidate the value chain of the contemporary art industry as a collective entity (Figure 5) and through which the value-added process is fulfilled. It is this loosely connected value chain that valorises specific artworks and/or brands specific artists so that their values – be it market, artistic or social – are increased and delivered. Through a series of operations by the third-parties, for-profit and/or non-profit, a piece of artwork is transferred from the artist's studio to the storage of a museum's permanent collection.

Figure 6 The value chain of contemporary art game

It is worth noting that conventionally in the West each of those components or stakeholders in various clusters of the 'value chain' are independent from one another due to their own expert knowledge and business models. However, they share a consensus in respective code of conducts and are under the supervision of government authorities and laws. Reproducing such an ecosystem or infrastructure in its entirety within only a few dozen years (under the auspices of foreign direct and indirect investments) in post-Mao China yields great opportunities to achieve some sort of an art oligarchy or monopoly, in an unconventional way, amid the institutional voids in the face of the absence of

relevant art laws and regulations. Under such circumstances, chances often prevail to overlook or violate the code of ethics in the art industry of CCA. For example, an art professor simultaneously running a commercial gallery, a gallerist publishing an art journal or an art critique dealing art as well – and an investor-collector founding an art award or a museum to promote his or her own holdings. Conflicts of interests as such should usually reduce the credibility or harm the reputation of those art stakeholders who engaged in such an undertaking. However, it seems that they have suffered very little given the high ROI they obtain from the Chinese contemporary art game.

From a postcolonial perspective, the findings of this sub-study expounds how the art world of post-Mao China has been modernised by modelling it on the market-oriented art system in the Anglo-American style. Again, modernisation here means Westernisation, as part of the results from the country's shifting its system of political economy from following communism to capitalism in the art world. Unlike the one in the 1920s which focuses on art education, this time it is 'art use' in generating a market economy. In this light, the findings help confirm the thesis of this dissertation: Chinese contemporary art is the medium is the message of a coloniality from the West.

3.2 (Inter)National Politics in Arts and Culture

The shifting of the system of political economy by the social reforms of Deng unveiled the fast development of CCA under the auspices of foreign investments, from the globalised market economics in the Anglo-American style. It is worth considering the possibility of an alternative model, provided by a social system different from the ones of capitalism and communism. This reflection may bring new insights on the possible direction for the arts and culture of developing countries in relation to decolonisation, modernisation and globalisation. The third article 'Turning Right / Turning Left? A Neoclassical Socio-economic Query of Art Institutes in Finland' studies the art system of a welfare society in the Nordic region, where the use of art has been for the making of a cultural and national identity, the promotion of people's wellbeing (to increase human capital) and the fuelling of a digital innovation economy. In a general sense, when compared to the Anglo-American style, discernibly, in Northern Europe the social value of contemporary art has been prioritised. Shifting the focus back to Asia, the fourth article 'Museum Coloniality: Displaying Asian Arts in the Whitened Context' tackles the phenomenon of coloniality visualised, materialised or performed through museums – an institution that originated from the Enlightenment and which was enriched by massive gains from overseas colonies and globalised to non-Western worlds through colonisation and imperialism. The way of seeing the art of the Other embodied in the exhibition

format of the white cube in so-called universal museums[142] has been reproduced in an identical way by those national museums of the 'countries of origin'[143] (mostly the former colonised or semi-colonised countries) and becomes the way of seeing the art of the Self. Such a colonial legacy has been extended as well to include the contemporary art world in China.

3.2.1 System of Political Economy and the Use of Art

The discussion on the Finnish convention of art in the article 'Turning Right / Turning Left? A Neoclassical Socio-economic Query of Art Institutes in Finland'[144] provides an example for the use of contemporary art. As a welfare state, the Finnish (or Scandinavian) model differs from the Anglo-American one duplicated in post-Mao China, where the development of the contemporary art system has been guided by the market economy under the banner of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. It is worth noting that in the post-conflict era globalisation (of the neoliberalist market economy) penetrated China as well as Eastern Europe to the Gulf of Finland. One significant indicator is the Guggenheim transnational art enterprise. In 2011, the Guggenheim Helsinki Plan was proposed by a few local politicians together with the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, which sought to create another branch following its success stories outside of the United States in Venice, Bilbao, Berlin and Abu-Dhabi and some failed ones (often accompanied by financial or political scandals) in Austria, Brazil, Mexico, Taiwan, China[145] and Lithuania. Considering how the Guggenheim has achieved and demonstrated a growing international cultural economy generated by the globalisation of its art enterprise from North America, the Guggenheim Helsinki Plan can be understood as a signalling a hope that the Finnish art system would towards a further neoliberalism. The plan, however, failed. The main reason is the country's use of art in a nationalist and then welfare tradition, where art has been playing an instrumental role for building nation-state and cultural identity, enhancing human capital (through formal and informal art education), generating a creative industry and fuelling innovation economy of advanced digital technology.

Already in the 18th century, the power struggle between the Swedish Crown and Novgorod had seeded the development of an independent nation-state in this country of Eurasia. In 1788, a letter to Russia was written by local officers (out of the feeling that Sweden regarded Finland simply as a military stage) to express the desire for peace. In the 19th century, a plan for an independent Finland that influenced greatly the court of Russia was drawn by Sprengtporten (1740–1819), accompanied by a growing sense of 'Finnishness'.

[142] Peter-Klaus K Schuster, 'Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums', *ICOM News*, 2004.
[143] Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, 'A Plea for the Restitution of an Irreplaceable Cultural Heritage to Those Who Crated It', 1978, 451.
[144] Keywords: art education, art history, art market, arts management, branding, cultural economy, cultural identity, cultural policy, museology, neoliberalism.
[145] 'Guggenheim Mulls Museum Project in Beijing', *Reuters*, 7 January 2007.

Lacking a high culture and 'important cultural heritage',[146] such a nationalist sentiment against the tsar's Russification[147] was promoted by Swedish-speaking elites with the art made by themselves, their peers or students as material witness – which were later turned from vernacular art to high art in the newly independent nation-state. To further define this 'pre-nationalism', Juslenius (1676–1752) fantasised a Finnic culture related to Greek and Hebrew. Porthan (1739–1804) imagined a lost great civilisation through folklore and tried to construct Finnish ethnicity through language. In 1917, when the grand duchy found itself without the tsar being its duke and the country independent, it was in (contemporary) art making – as seen in painting, music, architecture and literature – that the (Swedish-speaking) elites sought to create a collective identity, artistically, culturally and politically. Several 'learned societies' were established by these Fennomanic elites, and relevant collections were accumulated and later became the content of museum institutes. For instance, the 1870 Finnish Antiquarian Society's documentation of historical monuments became the content of the National Museum of Finland under the administration of the National Board of Antiquity; the 1846 Finnish Art Society's collection became the basis of the National Gallery; the 1821 Societas Pro Fauna et Flora Fennica donated part of its collection to the 1924 National Museum of Natural History. This background enabled a cultural policy of using art to forge a nation-state's identity, including using architecture as a potent instrument to express a sentiment of nationalism. This resulted in several museum buildings with 'Finnish characteristics' in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

This brief account of the historical background makes it explicit that the (contemporary) art of 'Finnishness' did not exist before the Romantic Finnish nationalism, invented by those Fennomanic Swedish-speaking elites. Starting from scratch (as Zachris Topelius has cynically criticised that 'visual art in Finland was to be found only on curtains and wallpapers'),[148] they brought back the art convention from continental Europe – where (contemporary) art at the time was used to express artists' discontent towards the goods of mass production after industrialisation. The first mission for those newly founded Finnish arts societies was to cultivate Finnish art makers. For example, the Finnish Artist Society opened the Drawing School in 1848 and began purchasing artworks from Europe for pedagogical purpose. It became the school that educated the first 'Finnish artists', like Albert Edelfelt, Axel Gallen, Helene Schjerfbeck and Ellen Thesleff. Their works were then regarded as of strong Finnishness or Finnish features – and were collected by the school and later became part of the 'national collection'. This development not only reflects a

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[146] For example, in the late 17th century there were only 20 sites reported to the Antiquities College in Stockholm by the appointed clergy; the few church heritages were found small and humble though could be dated back to the medieval time; and there was not any part of royal art collection or cabinet of curiosity kept here locally from Stockholm or St. Petersburg, and very few private art collections bought by those newly-rich during the time of industrialization were left.
[147] E C Thaden, *Russificatoin in the Baltic Provinces and Finland: 1885-1914* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981).
[148] S Pettersson, *Becoming Number One Player in Art* (Helsinki: Finnish Art Society, 2015).

primary cultural policy rooted in intellectualism and nationalism[149] but also indicates a strong instrumental view on the arts from the beginning of Finnish art education. The notion of *l'art pour l'art* ('art for art's sake') from the French art tradition in the early 19th century was not applied in Finland. After independence, the nationalist art view was integrated into the formal and informal education system. In constructing a Finnish history of cultural policy, Sokka and Kangas divided the timeline into three periods: (1) nation building 1860–1960, (2) the welfare state 1960–90, and (3) competitive society 1990–present. This view confirms the instrumental role of art in the Finnish tradition. First, art served nationalism and helped create an independent nation-state from the tsar. Then it became a tool to cultivate human capital for building a welfare system, driven by an education philosophy in equality, non-competitiveness, collaboration, free education and the individual rights of teachers and students. Now that the turn towards neoliberalist market economy has become a contested subject in many welfare or post-welfare societies, Finland also attempted to re-define the use of art in the 21st century.

However, being used for creating national identity, increasing quality education and enhancing social wellbeing,[150] art in this welfare system of political economy is seldom considered a commodity but instead a means of self-expression, mental health and emotional comfort.[151] Comparatively abundant funding opportunities, fair fiscal structure and a strong social security system have contributed to providing artists with a rather stable though moderate financial life should that person choose to be a self-employed independent art professional – although the economic recession has created discontent among artists and pushed forward the idea that art should generate tangible value ('market value'). This new line of thought has been furthered by the conception that artistic creativity should be fused with the innovation economy of advanced science and technology. In 2010, the concept of bridging culture to creativity through 'hard' and 'soft' infrastructure was included in the government's policy to put 'creative economy and culture at the heart of innovation',[152] which suggested that arts and culture can be an inspiration for creativity as well as essential for building an innovation economy. This view of art in Finland is inspiring in the way it integrates art into the social system for the welfare of the general public, instead of allowing it to be part of the private holdings of the rich and the powerful that can be traded on the market with exponentially growing return of investment, with the value being cunningly added, as seen in the Chinese contemporary art game.

The case of the Finnish art tradition seems to imply that to resist the colonial powers (Sweden and then Russia) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries

[149] S Sokka and A Kangas, 'At the Roots of Finnish Cultural Policy: Intellectuals, Nationalism, and the Arts', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 13.2 (2007), 185–202.
[150] H L Liikanen, *Art and Culture for Well-Being: Proposal for an Action Programme 2010-2014* (Helsinki, 2010).
[151] *Arts and Skills-Source of Well-Being: Third International Journal of International Arts Education*, ed. by H Ruismäku and I Ruokonen (Helsinki: Helsinki University, 2011).
[152] Minedu, *Arts Education and Cultural Education in Finland* (Helsinki, 2010).

and to face globalisation in the age of the neoliberalist market economy of the post-conflict era, nationalistic policies and retaining one's own tradition (welfare system) in the arts and culture are often part of the solution. This may resonate with the rise of Chinese Dream in the second decade of the 21st century.

3.2.2 The Colonialist Way of Seeing the Other/Self

Given the criticism of neo-colonisation as globalising the neoliberalist market economy to emerging economies in the post-conflict era, it is important to re-examine how coloniality has been devised systematically in non-Western worlds. The article 'Museum Coloniality: Displaying Asian Arts in the Whitened Context' [153] is a powerful contribution to such an endeavour. From the perspective of how the West's cultural supremacy or hegemony has been constructed and delivered to and retained in the rest of the world, including Asia, since the Age of New Imperialism, it investigates the museum phenomenology of the white cube – a physical visualisation, materialisation and performance of coloniality. Originating from Europe, the museum as a cultural institution together with its white-cube *muséographie* provide a subtle mechanism for colonisation and coloniality under the auspices of colonial powers and followed by local polities in former colonised or semi-colonised countries. [154] After decolonisation in the post-WWII era (between 1945 and 1960), three dozen new states have achieved autonomy or outright independence from their Western colonial rulers. As a colonial legacy, the museum institution generally avoided criticism while proliferating to this day. The colonialist way of seeing and using cultural heritage (including CCA, a cultural heritage in the making) of the Other through the window of the museum has been duplicated by the formerly colonised. It becomes identical worldwide today with major Western museums (especially the so-called universal museums) as the prototype. The process of using the museum mechanism to 'reformat' (modernise, Westernise globalise) the cultures of the Other is embodied, in a way, in those undertakings of West-leading international organisations, for example, as performed by CIDOC-ICOM-UNESCO-UN in digitising (on the basis of identifying, categorising and classifying) the scientific knowledge of the Other's cultures. In addition to such an internal way of cultural colonisation or coloniality, white-cube practice can be regarded as an external demonstration or performance of it. With respect to Asian cultures, the most representative universal museum is Musée Guimet (the 'world's biggest Asian art museum outside of Asia') in Paris. The museum has been applying the *muséographie* of white cube since its reopening after WWII. As seen in the latest renovation in the late 1990s, the white cube of Musée Guimet is further improved by the cutting-edge museum design characterized by its tall ceiling, screened natural light, white walls, white stands, minimal amount of

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[153] Keywords: white-cube, Musée Guimet, museum of religions, museum of art, coloniality, delinking.

[154] Chauncey J Hamlin, 'A Letter to Leaders in Museum Work in Various Countries throughout the World (1946)', in *History of ICOM 1946-1996*, ed. by Sid Baghli, Patrick Boylan, and Yani Herreman (Paris: ICOM, 1998).

panelling and small labels. Invented by the Bauhaus in the 1920s to give modernity a physical form and adopted by Nazi Germany to display propaganda art as well as many other leading museums in the West to exhibit contemporary art, the white-cube of the art museum becomes a symbol of ideological or intellectual norms and value, justified by (Western) art historians or critiques (as well as ethnologist or archaeologist), whose 'scientific knowledge' has been universalised to 'the rest' under the shadow of modernisation.

It is worth noting that the history of Musée Guimet itself provides a vivid profile of colonising Asia. Based on the personal collection of Émile Guimet – the heir of a family fortune built by the industrialisation of manufacturing artificial ultramarine and a typical white-male-elite bourgeoise orientalist at the time. In 1873, Guimet joined the Association of Japanese, Chinese, Tartars and Indochinese Studies and organised the very first International Congress of Orientalists, which became a key venue for sharing findings from and exchanging information about Asia – which directly contributed to the 'race for antiquities' in Central Asia during the Great Game. In 1874, he visited Copenhagen and learned about the pedagogical exhibition of the Museum of Ethnography.[155] In 1876, he took up the commission from the Minister of Public Instruction of Cults and Fine Arts and carried out an expedition to Japan, China and India, which resulted in a scientific report as well as a rich amount of private collections (some of which were shown in the 1878 *Exposition Universelle*). In 1879, to gather 'under the same ceiling all the gods of humankind' he founded a museum in Lyon (which was nationalised and later moved to its current premises in Paris). While Musée Guimet and the like in the metropole transformed from being a private museum to national museum and then to universal museum during the 20th century, colonial museums in the colonies became national one after another after decolonisation. For example, the national Indian Museum came from the Asiatic Society of Bengal founded by Sir William Jones in 1784; the National Museum (of Malaysia) (opened in 1963) from the Selangor Museum by the British and Selangor government in 1898; the National Museum of Indonesia (opened in 1950) from the (Dutch) Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences in Batavia in 1778; and the National Museum of Vietnamese History (opened in 1958) from the archaeological research institution of the École française d'Extrême-Orient in 1908. After WWII, parts of Southeast Asia became the battleground for civil wars or proxy wars between communist and anti-communist forces. The devastating results were imprinted in the history as well as in the exhibition of these Asian national museums, for example, by changing the name of the museum to the winning polities or adding a revolutionary chapter to the narrative of museum exhibition. It is worth noting that to offer help, intergovernmental heritage preservation and management agencies (such as the World Heritage List or the aforementioned CIDOC of UNESCO-UN) have been devised to link the concept and practice of heritage preservation and development work to the tourism economy, which in turn formed a heritage

[155] Caroline Hauer, 'Paris: Musée Guimet, Musée National Des Arts Asiatiques, Oeuvre d'un Homme, Passion de l'orientalisme - XVIème', *Paris La Douce* , 2020.

diplomacy, one often found to be in line with certain geopolitical and or geocultural agendas.

By continuing and learning the way of (collecting and) displaying the Other as embodied in the white cube of universal museums from Western Europe and North America, the way of seeing the Self in the national museums of Asia or Africa is Westernised (colonised) in pursuit of modernity. Such a process represents an epistemological 'whitening', a coloniality in the arts and culture of former colonised and semi-colonised countries. In fact, the original Musée Guimet during the Belle Époque was meant to be 'an institute or laboratory which served first to illustrate the teaching of founders of religions'. Under such a premise, its exhibition design had faithfully followed Guimet's idea to display 'authentic' Asian cultures. As in ethnography museums, mise-en-scène exhibits of religious practices were installed to manifest the intangible interconnection between artefacts and people (users) in a naturalistic and realistic way. After moving to Paris, the museum applied an educative muséographie utilising packs of vitrines, scattered spotlights, walls full of photographs and paintings and duplicates of original artefacts to provide background information.[156] After WWII, Musée Guimet reopened with a white-cube *muséographie*[157] – as a department of the Louvre specialising in 'Asian art' instead of religion (the shift being the result of the nationwide museum reorganisation in the 1930s), where the curatorial rationale of art history came to dominate.[158]. In 2001, the museum reopened after renovation with a more contemporary white-cube format, as mentioned. Using the original colour of raw material (metal and cement), natural light, open and airy space, and sparse and uncluttered display, such a style resonates with the one of commerical gallery for showing fine art and the one of luxury boutique for displaying highend commodities. This style actually comes from the architectural convention of the department store which emerged in the early 20th century to meet the needs of inudstrialised commerical society.[159] While the highend boutique takes up the image of museum to elevate its product value,[160] the millenium look of Musée Guimet advances to solely concentrate on the visual attraction and aesthetics of the cultural objects of the Other (of hight market value too).

This also serves as a model for those Asian museums that after decolonisation as a colonial legacy were maintained and used to continue collecting their cultural 'Self' in the same way as their former colonisers. For example, the National Museum in New Delhi built in 1949 after decolonisation has modelled on the Indian Museum in Calcutta (founded by former the colonial government) with a focus on art. In Sri Lanka, the Colombo Museum was enlarged by establishing branch institutes in Jaffna, Kandy and Ratnapura,

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156 (Héron 2001)

157 Philippe Stern, 'Muséographie Au Musée Guimet', *Museum*, 1.1/2 (1948), 51–54.

158 Aurore Francotte, 'Emile Guimet, Une Entreprise Muéale Hors Du Commun', *Les Cahier de Muséologie*, 2 (2017), 1–19.

159 (Whitaker 2011, 7)

160 Annamma Joy and others, 'M(Art)Worlds: Consumer Perceptions of How Luxury Brand Stores Become Art Institutions', *Journal of Retailing*, 90 (2014), 347–64.

following the colonial Royal Asiatic Society.[161] In Indonesia, the National Museum after independence gave its collection of manuscripts to the National Library and the artworks to the National Gallery. The National Museum of Vietnamese History (based on the collection of École française d'Extrême-Orient) since 1958 has been expanded to include a new episode of the August 1945 Revolution. Almost inclusively, these Asian museums have retained the colonialist narrative, representation and perspective almost intact. This pan-Asia cultural phenomenon of museum coloniality also includes China, a formerly semi-colonised country. After the establishment of a republican government, the way of seeing Chinese arts and culture was made through the window of the museum as well. Although the museum has become a tool for government propaganda between 1949 and 1978 while the Party strived for a total break from traditional culture to build a modern China of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, the market-oriented art economy together with museum praxis and heritage enterprise re-entered and thrived in China after 1978. Until the national strategy of the Chinese Dream, including BRI and the Chinese Cultural Renaissance, the way of seeing China's 'Self' embodied in traditional arts and culture has inclined to be 'modernised' according to the advanced model of the former colonial powers in Western Europe and North America, an approach which has been made explicit by Chinese contemporary art. It is worth noting that when entering non-Western worlds like China, the colonialist mechanism of the museum institution appears to be used by the mainstream (Han Chinese) towards the minorities (as other ethnic or aboriginal and indigenous cultures), for example, in the areas of Mongolia, Xinjiang or Tibet. This may imply a perplexed (de)coloniality of China or China(s).

3.3 Social Relevance in the Avant-Garde

As mentioned above, the social value (relevance) of CCA – the impacts of CCA on the public's everyday life – is little discussed when compared to its political implication and criticism. This is made prominent by the question of gender equality in the making of art history in China, including the modern and contemporary era, as explored in the fifth article 'Fashioning Chinese Feminism: Women and Their Art in the Art History of Modern'. From the feminist perspective, it appears that modernisation (or Westernisation) pursued by the decolonised traditions can be selective and partial. Examining women and their art in modern China throughout the 20th century, such a phenomenon becomes more prominent. One thing often overlooked in the Chinese contemporary art world is that the key actor-agents (proxy agents) of the network of the West-leading art game are principally male. While promoting universal norms and values such as human rights, CCA seems to exclude Chinese feminist art (and by extension, feminism) or marginalise it in its narrative and campaign. Eventually,

[161] SH Ranjith, 'Colombo National Museum', *Colombo National Museum*.

the darker side of modernisation in the Chinese context after 1978 may be brighter than between 1949 to 1978. This phenomenon highlights the complexity of the local attitude towards Western modernity – thus (de)coloniality – considering the diversified 'Self' with respect to the minority or non-mainstream marginal groups as women and the LGBTQ.

3.3.1 Gender Equality in the Modernising China

The article 'Fashioning Chinese Feminism: Women and Their Art in the Art History of Modern China'[162] begins with a description of the 798 Contemporary art district in Beijing in which the following is observed: (1) the majority of gallery staff were women; (2) a high percentage of female art professionals (gallerists, journalists and artists) had artist-partners; (3) most art students were female but those who occupied the top-tier art lists were male; and (4) most female contemporary artists refused to be tagged as 'female artists'. This provides a detailed delineation of 'gender equality' in the Chinese contemporary art world. Viewed from the market perspective, Chinese feminist art has received growing curatorial interest in recent years[163] but has remained rather marginal in CCA. For example, it was completely absent in the *Exhibition of Chinese Modern Art* in 1989, a milestone that concluded the 'golden decade' for the development of CCA after 1978. In fact, women's rights and gender equality have not been an artistic concern in CCA until the mid-1990s, when the UN's World Conference on Women was held in Beijing – as a political gesture to reconcile with the West after the Tiananmen Square Protests[164] – which began to attract scholarly interests from fields such as sociology, policy studies and art.[165] Becoming visible in the global market only in the 2010s,[166] Chinese feminist art has yet to establish a local interpretation of the Guerrilla Girls or the #Me Too movement – while CCA has long embraced all other avant-garde art movements or theories of the West, especially political pop.

To understand why such a lag exists, it is helpful to explore the role of women and their art in the making of art history in (modern) China. Under the radical expansion of European colonisation and the urgent need to modernise the country, women in China became a target for cultural engineering and social revolution driven by those male literati of advanced thinking. It is worth noting that modernisation in China began with military technology, then continued

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162 Keywords: Chinese female artist, modernisation, early illustration, calendar-poster girl, geisha-like ladies, Chinese feminism, revolution body, fashioning modernity, contemporary art, artist-couple, women history, men-dominating art world.
163 Sophie Guo, 'Gender in Chinese Contemporary Art' (London: Tate Research Centre, 2018); Sasha Su-Ling Welland, *Expermimental Beijing: Gender and Globalization in Chinese Contemporary Art* (Duke: Duke University Press, 2018).
164 Leta Hong Fincher, *Betraying Big Brother: The Feminist Awakening in China* (London: Verso, 2018).
165 (Barlow 2004; Hershatter 2004)
166 Monica Merlin, 'Women Artists and Feminism in Contemporary Mainland China: New Perspectives and Practices' (London: University of Westminister, 2010); Sasha Su-Ling Welland, 'What Women Will Have Been: Reassessing Feminist Cultural Production in China: A Review Essay', *Signs*, 31.4 (2006), 941–66.

with the political system and arts and culture over four periods: (1) from the late Qing period to the 1911 Revolution, (2) from 1911 to the 1949 Revolution, (3) from 1949 to 1978 the opening-up policy, and (4) from 1979 to date. This gradual and tortuous process has been well illustrated (or performed) by the fashioned look and image of women and their art. The most representative image of women before 1911 is the news illustrations made by the male artist Wu Youru (1840–1893)[167] as seen in the *Pictorial of Dianshizhai*, a weekly illustrated supplement to the daily newspaper *Shen Bao*, the very first Chinese newspaper published by a British businessman, Ernest Major (1841-1908). In these lithographs, an art technique originally imported to China for printing the Bible, the image of 'modern women' was often depicted as joyously tasting the exotic 'modern' things coming from the West. It is worth noting that these women were not ordinary women. Western scholars tend to categorise them as 'prostitutes'[168] yet Chinese scholars call them 'courtesans'.[169] In a way, they were like the 'geisha' in Japan, representing an ancient tradition in the Sinosphere – where 'women in talents' of low social class would risk being sold to a brothel-hotel-cabaret like place and being trained in performing arts (music, dancing or singing), visual arts (Chinese painting or calligraphy) and literature (reciting and making poetry) for men's pleasure. In a tradition where women should stay home with good virtue to attain a domestic life, these 'career women' became one of the first social groups exposed to Western modernity in a materialistic way, like through cuisine, carriage, billiards or telescope.[170] After the 1911 Revolution, it became possible for women to be independent by working as teachers, writers, painters, singers, dancers or opera and movie actresses.[171] Following the globalisation of consumer society, between 1911 and 1949, the image of women became largely used for marketing mass-produced products through, for example, the specific medium of the calendar-poster – a hybrid form of publication that combined the tradition of Chinese New Year paintings, the printing of Western calendars and the advertisements and commercials of consumer products. In 1883, the company Shen Bao was the first to commission such a poster-calendar with its logo printed on top of it and distributed for free as New Year's gifts to clients. This marketing strategy was quickly taken up by other companies to promote goods such as pantyhose, soap, cosmetics, medicine and cigarettes. As such, the circulating visuals (of women's images) on this 'Yue-fen-pai (monthly calendar plate)'[172] in return made those female models into fashion icons – symbols of modernity. One of the leading graphic designers of such visuals was the male artist Zheng Mantuo (1888–1961), who invented a special technique mixing traditional

[167] Ulrich Theobald, 'Dianshizhai Huabao: The Illustrated Lithographer', *China Knowledge*, 2012.
[168] Christian Henriot, *Belles de Shanghai: Prostitution et Sexualité En China Aux XIXe-XXe Sicècles* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1997); Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in 20th Century Shanghai* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).
[169] Catherine Yeh, *Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture 1850-1910* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2006).
[170] (Lithographes of Wu Youru 1998)
[171] Yeh.
[172] (Wu and Li 2014)

methods (brushwork and shading with ink and silk paper) and Western techniques (charcoal sketching, water colour and oil painting).[173] Unlike those geisha-like ladies of Wu, the fashion models of Zheng had diverse social backgrounds as movie stars, singers and dancers or as female socialites from the upper class. Where Wu's girls wore traditional costumes while tasting Western cuisine and playing with imported gadgets, Zheng's models posed for him wearing the latest fashion from head to toe, including hairstyles, clothes, shoes and cosmetics like perfumes or creams. However, after 1949, this capitalist image of Chinese women changed abruptly. Under the rule of Mao, the look and image of women was politicised with an aesthetics of revolutionary uniforms, as indicated by the Party's strategy to organise women rights movements for attaining class conflicts[174] from the 4th National Congress in 1931. Instead of Qipao, a close-fitting feminine robe showing the silhouette of the female body, the Russian Brage (or Bragi) became the only choice for Mao's trendy girls.[175] Men's factory overalls and dungarees and military uniforms[176] (or 'Lenin suit') in blue and grey became the new normal.[177] To make women 'employable' like men,[178] a series of slogans targeted at 'half the sky' (in Mao's words) were spread throughout the country, such as 'what men can do, women can as well', 'time is different, men and women are equal', 'same wage for men and women' and (women) 'prefer military uniform over gay dress'. However, all this came to an end with the opening-up policy announced in 1978 – which brought the French fashion tycoon Pierre Cardin to visit Beijing and launched a new phase as China became the world's factory.

In addition to women's image of art (made by men) which profiles women's situation in general, women's art (made by themselves) further reveals the difficult development of Chinese feminism and women's rights from traditional to modern and contemporary China. It is worth noting that it was not until the 1920s that the first generation of professionally trained female artists came to exist in China. Although most of their art seemed identical to that of their male colleagues in from, content and style, women for the first time in China's long history were able to put their own touch on the writing and making of Chinese art history. One prominent figure was Pan Yuliang (1895–1977), a Chinese female artist who painted in the Western style. As a typical geisha-like lady who was redeemed and married to one of her clients as a concubine, Pan entered the Shanghai Fine Art Academy in 1920 and went to the Beaux-arts de Lyon in 1921

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173 (Wu 2006; Huang et al. 2014; Sheng 2019)
174 Xinwei (光新偉) Guang, *On Tthe Shifting Principles of Advocacy Action Decided at the 4th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (論中共四大宣傳工作方針的轉變)* (Beijing, 2015).
175 Jin Lim, 'A Satorial Blast from the Communist Past: The First Fashion Show(s) in the People's Republic of China (1956)', *Medium: Internal Reference*, 5 August 2016.
176 Xurong Kong, 'Military Uniform as a Fashion during the Cultural Revolution', *Intercultural Communication Studies* , 17.2 (2008), 287–303.
177 Antonia Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).
178 Siding (白思鼎) Bai and Huayu (李華鈺) Li, *China Learns from the Soviet Union: 1949-Present (中國學習蘇聯：1949 至今)* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Chinese University Press, 2019).

and the Beaux-arts de Paris and the Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma in 1926. In 1929, she participated in the first Chinese art exhibition in Shanghai,[179] but received severe criticism from the authorities and the public for the motif of her oil painting – female nudity – while her female peers enjoyed success with traditional ink-and-paper descriptions of landscapes and gardens.[180] The situation for women artists like her did not improve after 1949, despite Party claims to emancipate women from tradition. It has become visibly worse, as women were ordered to cover their physical features under degendered uniforms and dungarees. At the same time, women's art also became excluded from the public eye.[181] In the permanent collection (of oil painting) of the National Art Museum of China, dated between 1949 to 1978, there is only propaganda art, in which women figures are depicted mostly as working in the factories or harvesting in the fisheries or fields. The conventional art theme of female nudity (in Western oil painting and drawing) exists only in the works created before 1949 and after 1978 – by male artists. Besides, throughout the entire period under Mao's rule, not a single solo exhibition of female artists was organised in the immense country.[182] Coming into the post-Mao era, although female artists have participated in the making of CCA, feminist art did not occur until after the turn of the millennium. The life and work of two prominent Chinese contemporary female artists provides a clear picture about the difficult change of the situation for women rights or gender equality in CCA – Xiao Lu and Lu Qing (as well as their respective artist-boyfriend and artist-husband Tang Song and Ai Weiwei). Both of these female artists were born in the 1960s, grew up during the Cultural Revolution and graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Art. Xiao left China in the early 1990s and Lu in the early 1980s with their artist-partners. The former returned to Beijing in 2002, now single, and relaunched her art career by claiming her sole-authorship over the much discussed artwork *Dialogue*,[183] which was believed for a long time to be co-authored with Tang Song – who was the one giving the artist statement to the press and media with a grand narrative of political criticism, regardless of the original meaning of the work to be intimate relationship between lovers. Within a few years, Xiao Lu became one of the few leading Chinese feminist artists, presenting her works worldwide.[184] However, Lu Qing had a different story. Instead of pursuing her own art career, she stayed behind Ai Weiwei and remained distant from the outer world – except posing for his art[185] (in his

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[179] (Zheng 2000)
[180] Amanda Wangwright, *The Golden Key: Modern Women Artists and Gender Negotiations in Republican China (1911-1949)* (London: BRILL, 2020).
[181] Michael Sullivan, 'Art in China since 1949', *The China Quarterly* (Cambridge University PressSchool of Oriental and African Studies, 1999), pp. 712–22.
[182] (Tao 2009)
[183] Hau (張浩) Zhang, 'Dialogue: Xiao Lu's Personal Matter (肖魯談裝置作品「對話」：源於個人感情困惑)', *Beijing Daily* (Beijing, 27 September 2012).
[184] Holland Cotter, 'China's Female Artists Quietly Emerge', *The New York Times* (New York, 30 July 2008); Merlin.
[185] Holland Cotter, 'From Creativity to Controversial: The Path for Chinese Artists Reaching the World (從創意到爭議，中國藝術家通往世界之路)', *The New York Times* (New York, 10 October 2017).

photographic work *June 1994*, a parody of a tourist photograph in Tiananmen Square where she exhibited herself under the gaze of Mao), promoting his exhibitions (at Tate Modern[186] in 2011) and coming to his rescue when he was imprisoned by the government for tax evasion.[187] These two paths of Chinese women artists in CCA illustrate two stereotypes of the 'second sex', and they serve as a fitting annotation for the aforementioned ethnographic observation in the 798 contemporary art district. Intriguingly, the struggle of Chinese contemporary female artists is made explicit by Ai. In 2008, in an interview by a local magazine he was asked why the art careers of women artists are often unstable or interrupted, like the one of your wife.[188] He answered, 'It will be ideal if women do not need to pay too high a price for making a living', and continued, 'It is better for women to stay relaxed and distant from the society'.[189] Should this be the opinion of the world's most known Chinese dissident-activist for human rights, the lag in women's rights and gender equality in contemporary China becomes understandable.

The findings of this sub-study elucidate (1) how the image of women and their art in the art history of modern China has reflected the tortuous process of modernisation of the country throughout the 20th century; (2) that modernisation can be a hybrid cultural regeneration in the mix of the Western and the Chinese cultural traditions; and (3) the complexity of the question of modernisation as well as (de)coloniality in the non-Western cultures facing different interests groups. The visual analysis of the study on women's fashion and art implies that the concept and practice of 'the West' and 'the Chinese' or 'the modern' and 'the traditional' might not be dichotomic at some point and that the presence of the colonial power might not be necessarily bounded with the movement towards modernisation or Westernisation. In the latter case, the logical liaison between decolonisation and decoloniality or delinking becomes questionable. This will be further explored in section 4.2.

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[186] Hugo Tillman, 'Quiet Lioness of China: Lu Qing', *Vogue Italia*, December 2011.
[187] Tania Branigan, 'Chinese Officials Question Ai Weiwei's Wife: Lu Qing's Summons to Beijing Office Suggests Authorities May Bring Tax-Related Charges against Detained Artist', *The Guardian*, 12 April 2011.
[188] Agnes, 'Dialogue: Desire and Existence (對話：慾望與生存)', *Fortune Life (財富生活)* (Beijing, July 2008).
[189] Artbank, 'Shared Art, Shared Love (藝術夫妻檔)', *Art Bank*, 2010.

4 DISCUSSION

By including in their scope the Chinese contemporary art game in the light of foreign investments and the formula of valorisation, the impacts of nation and international politics on the development of art in terms of political economy and intellectual tradition as well as the social relevance of contemporary art embodied in gender issues, the five independent and mutually related studies discussed above develop the thesis that 'Chinese contemporary art is the medium is the message'. This thesis also addresses of the darker side of modernity modelled on Western Europe and North America in the non-Western world, in this case, in China. Composed of the methodologically and epistemologically very different domains of finance and art, the contemporary art game played by Western investors in developing countries such as China has been little explored (especially from the perspective of postcolonial criticism) in current arts studies, despite significant reports on the performance of the international art market,[190] the development of art economics[191] and the convention of atelier enterprises.[192] This research bridges this knowledge gap and points out that such a game is somehow reserved only for those top-tier players who already have a good relationship (Guan-xi) with local authorities. The game in actuality would help in building a local ecosystem or infrastructure of the market-oriented art industry in addition to generating profit from the emerging art economy, for better or worse. After all, in the contemporary art world, increasing market value (while being directly or indirectly related to artistic value) does not necessarily guarantee the same for social value. This is further exemplified by the relationship between various systems of political economy (be it the welfare, capitalist or communist societies) and the use of contemporary art. In the case of post-Mao China, it is palpable that globalisation in contemporary art would risk

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[190] Georgina Adam, *Bog Bucks: The Explosion of the Art Market in the 21st Century* (Ashgate Publhising Ltd., 2014); Donald Thompson, *The 12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art* (Westwood Creative Artisits Ltd., 2008).
[191] Neil De Marchi, *Economic Engagements with Art*, ed. by Craufurd DW Goodwin (Duke University Press, 1999).
[192] Svetlana Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise: The Studio and the Market* (The University of Chicago Press, 1988).

incurring a cultural neo-colonisation or a continuous coloniality (with a non-official presence of the West) via the neoliberal market mechanism guided by the leading art investor-collectors from Western Europe and North America. In this light, it is justifiable to revisit the postcolonial criticism of (de)coloniality so as to elucidate the still critical relationship today in the arts and culture between the West (the colonial metropoles) and 'the rest' (the colonised or semi-colonised countries). Under such circumstances, it is important to ask whether contemporary) art should serve only the rich and the powerful instead of the common public? Especially that contemporary art often advocates the universal norms and value as democracy and human rights, firmly believed by most of us since after WWII to date. And that a political expectation has been somehow given to CCA toward regarding a liberal China,[193] as seen in the artwork (political pop) favoured by the West-oriented international art market. The answer to the question becomes all the more important now that the rise of China with the Chinese Dream is contributing to the making of a new world order in relation to the strategic competition with the United States – and a new Cold War is seemingly taking shape. The Chinese Cultural Renaissance together with the Belt and Road Initiative have been playing a significant role in reshaping the cultural landscape of China from within and without since the second decade of the 21st century. It is therefore to be observed whether the darker side of CCA will eventually be brightened up by recalibrating or redefining modernity in line with decoloniality or delinking in contemporary China – which has transformed itself from an agriculture-based society into the world's factory and an industrialised global powerhouse, a process faithfully recorded by and reflected in the composition of CCA.

4.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

In section 1.1, it is stated that globalisation in the post-conflict era – with the expansion of the neoliberal market economy from the West to the developing countries, especially those that were formerly behind the Iron or Bamboo Curtain – has resulted in a phenomenon that contemporary art is regarded as global art by Western art historians. This provides a typical example for the aforementioned comment of postcolonialists – 'you are where you think'. To argue with such a West-centred viewpoint, it suffices to note that traditional art has not been replaced by contemporary (or modern) art in many non-Western countries, like China, as seen in the art education system and the art market, which is facing modernisation as well as the prevailing neo-colonialism or coloniality of the contemporary art economy. As a former semi-colonised country, China's national art tradition (unlike many of those 'aboriginal' or 'indigenous' ones in the settler societies of Americas or Africa) has been not only existing to

[193] This may due to the first impression made by the art of those young artists fleeing China to the West as Paris or New York after the Tiananmen Square protests.

date but also very likely to having a comeback given the bubble in the contemporary art market (especially following the major retreats of foreign in(direct) investments since the 2010s)[194] and especially under the above-mentioned national cultural policy of the Chinese Cultural Renaissance. Taking a global view from the standpoint of the Other, this research on the darker side of contemporary art in Chin' will be a powerful reference to the contemporary art worlds of non-Western cultural systems, as in Southeast Asia or Middle East.

In 1996, the first biennale of Southeast Asian contemporary art took place in Singapore, while the first special sale of Southeast Asian contemporary art was held in Sotheby's Hong Kong in 2008. To this specific art market, the countries of provenances of artworks included Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Vietnam.[195] After the major Western patron-collector-investors of CCA (like Uli Sigg or Guy Ullens) cashed out their holdings in China (and Hong Kong) around 2010, the contemporary art market of Southeast Asia began to grow exponentially, as reported by the journalist Frances Arnold: 'with its investor-collector base shifting from domestic to international acquisitions and the region's arts infrastructure scaling up, Southeast Asia is emerging as an important pillar in the global art market'.[196] The observations made by local art critics and Southeast Asian commentators are in line with this research on the struggle to (de)colonialise art in China. The important issues being addressed comprise the social purpose of contemporary art making, the figurative narration of painting, the identity dilemmas across borders and the defending of 'tradition' against 'modernisation'.[197]

In Middle East, the region the early postcolonial critics of Orientalism focus on, a similar situation could be identified. In 2005, Christie's set up a branch in Dubai – which has marked the debut of a drastic growth of international market interest in Arabic and Iranian contemporary art. The high return of foreign investments from the art game in this region was exposed in 2018 when the Abraaj Group was ordered by the court to restructure, resulting in liquidising its holdings of Middle Eastern (and South Asian) contemporary art. It is worth noting that this private equity firm[198] consisted of significant investors from North America and Western Europe such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Essex County Council pension fund and the International Finance Corporation (part of the World Bank). The incident has confirmed the speculation that the contemporary art of non-Western worlds serves as an ideal target for (Western) investors to gain publicity and international credibility – meanwhile generating a high ROI, as purchases were often made through auctions for record

[194] Georgina Adam, *Dark Side of the Boom: The Excesses of the Art Market in the 21st Century* (Lund: Lund Humphries, 2018).
[195] 'Modern & Contemporary Southeast Asian Art', *The Sotheby's* , 2020.
[196] Frances Arnold, 'Southeast Asia's Art Market Expands Beyond Singapore', *Artsy*, 11 January 2017.
[197] Tan Boon Hui, '4 Propositions - Looking at Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia', *BeMuse*, 4.2 (2011).
[198] A 'private equity firm' does not maintain ownership for the long term, but rather prepares an exit strategy after several years.

sums way beyond the estimates.[199] Similar to what happened to Chinese art, such a development of global art market has turned the scholarly focus of traditional Arab studies from pre-colonial art to modern[200] and contemporary art.[201] Except for its utilisation of local cultural features like traditional or religious symbols or icons, the contemporary art of Southeast Asia and the Middle East has adopted the globalised Western art tradition in the pursuit of modernity or contemporaneity (under the banner of the avant-garde). In this light, the findings and result of this research on the topics of foreign investment, valorisation, political economy, art display and gender equality (social relevance) may be also be valid in the contemporary art worlds in these non-Western worlds.

4.2 Limit and Validity

Section 2.2 identifies the postcolonial theory of (de)coloniality as the backbone for the conceptual framework of this research, but suggests that might be challenging due to the fact that the original context the theory aims at is the settler society in the Americas – which does not exist in the Sinosphere. One of the most explicit challenges is perhaps linguistic. For example, in the Chinese context, it may be confusing to use postcolonial terminology to discuss the cultural relationship between the coloniser (the West) and the colonised (the non-Western), such as 'centre' (metropole) versus 'border or periphery' (colony) and to appropriate the anthropological terms to describe non-Western cultures as 'traditional', 'indigenous', 'aboriginal', 'native' or 'national' (on the supposition that the Western culture stands for the 'modern' or 'contemporary'). As a matter of fact, such a semantic confusion is made the most prominent in the Chinese context in relation to its long and tortuous process of modernisation. Unlike in most settler societies where the original or local art traditions have been largely destroyed and systematically discontinued due to the colonisation of the West, in China its traditional (or original, native and national) art tradition has continued to this date as seen in its double system of art education and the art market. In these, the Western (modern) and the national (traditional) have been separated, not only in the visual arts (where Western painting consists of oil painting, water colour and charcoal sketch and national painting of ink and paper) but also in the performing arts (dance, music and opera) and literature ever since the country's modernisations and reforms, including art education in the early 20th century. In this light, renaming contemporary art (including CCA) as 'global art' by Western art historians is to overlook the contemporaneous existence of Western art and Chinese art all along. This is a contemporary interpretation of

[199] Susan Moore, 'The Market for Middle Eastern Art | Apollo Magazine', *Apollo the International Art Magazine*, October 2018.
[200] Anneka Lenssen, Sarah Rogers, and Nada Shabout, *Modern Art in the Arab World: Primary Documents* (Duke: Duke University Press, 2018).
[201] Sophia Smith Galer, 'How Art Created Stereotypes of the Arab World' (BBC Culture, 2019).

the concept 'denial of coevalness', proposed by Johannes Fabian (1937–) in his seminal work *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, published in 1983. Coming back to the discussion of the aptness of applying (de)coloniality in this thesis, one efficient way to address the question is to remember that even though 'the signifier' may be different, 'the signified' can remain the same. Eventually, despite the various levels or degrees or ways of colonisation, the heterogeneity between the Western and the non-Western (the Chinese) systems in the global cultural landscape during the colonial, postcolonial or neo-colonial times in our modern history is undeniable, no matter how modernisation can differ or fuse the various cultural traditions in a one-sided or a more balanced way. One simple solution to clarify this point of view is simply to specify what the signifier (vocabulary) is to signify as the signified in the universe of meanings. That is, to replace postcolonial terms of 'border' or 'centre' with the actual names of specific geographical locations, for example, to replace 'border' or 'periphery' with 'Argentina', 'Indonesia' or 'China'; and to replace 'centre' with 'Paris', 'London' or 'Washington DC'. In this way, the signification attained by the signifier and the signified in signifying the specific postcolonial cultural phenomenon should remain unaltered in both the settler societies and the non-settler ones in the rest of the world versus the West. Besides, from the perspective of art history, as mentioned earlier, throughout the 20th century up until the 1980s, the Western scholarly interests in the art of the Other have focused almost exclusively on the so-called traditional or pre-modern forms of art in the non-Western worlds of the Middle East, Africa and Asia. It is not until the post-conflict era when the market economy of neoliberalism prevailed around the globe that the contemporary art making in these developing countries (former colonies or semi-colonies) began to catch the attention of Western art critics and historians. As a matter of fact, the question of 'authenticity and its modernist discontents' in the 'colonial encounter and African and Middle Eastern art history' [202] can be identified as well in the Chinese context, knowing that 'authenticity' has been invented or appropriated as a term of contemporary art criticism under the aforementioned circumstances. This again falls in the criticism of Quijano and Mignolo in the ambiguous interrelation between coloniality and modernity. In any case, the non-Western worlds do share an undeniable similarity while processing modernisation and facing the globalisation resulting from colonisation, New Imperialism and neo-colonisation in the post-conflict era.

Another challenge to applying the postcolonial criticism of (de)coloniality in this dissertation is the risk of overlooking the complexity of modernisation in the Chinese context by falling into the limited thinking framed by the dichotomy of the West and the Chinese or the modern and the traditional. Such an approach is sometimes criticised as simple relativism, lacking a thorough consideration of the relationship between the two seemingly opposite ends both vertically in time and horizontally in space, especially because in Sino-European history the

[202] Prita Meier, 'Authenticity and Its Modernist Discontents: The Colonial Encounter and African and Middle Eastern Art History', *The Arab Studies Journal* , 18.1 (2010), 12–45.

cultural exchange between the West and China can be traced back to the connection between the Roman Empire and the Han Empire through the Silk Road across Central Asia. Besides, some contemporary Western observations tend to put the Chinese on the same side as the West in terms of colonising the Other, due to the latter's actions in Tibet, Xinjiang and Mongolia. Such opinions may create an effect that invalidates or deconstructs the anti-colonialism or anti-imperialism narrative held firmly by the Chinese Communist Party in shaping foreign strategy or domestic policy. To delve into these discussions, it is worth noting some basic features of Chinese cultural system: (1) a continuity achieved through the Chinese tradition of written history, as seen in Orthodox Histories – the Chinese official dynastic histories starting from the earliest dynasty in 3000 BC to the Qing dynasty[203]; (2) a multiethnicity formed through the long Chinese history and vast territory, such as how the Yuan dynasty was established by Mongolians and Qing Manchurians; and (3) the most alien culture coming to conquer Asia in modern times is veritably the Western one embodied by those colonial powers. In addition, it is a fact that the results of the British Empire's triumph in the First Opium War (1839–1942) are not only that the opium trade got to continue but also that losses needed to be compensated, more trade ports were forced to open and Hong Kong was given to the British (until 1997). This colonial war preluded China's 'century of humiliation' as well as the long and courteous process of 'modernisation', as mentioned earlier, first in the domain of military technology then in the political system and eventually in the arts and culture of people's everyday lives. With the Western colonisers being the latest conqueror who brought devastating results as described, modernisation as a means for the Chinese to strengthen the country so as to retain independence is inevitably carried out with references to or under the shadow of the West. Within such a temporal and spatial framework, it is legitimate to employ the postcolonial theory of (de)coloniality to discuss the thesis argument of this dissertation that 'Chinese contemporary art is the medium is the message'. It is beyond the scope of this research to comment on those Western opinions that questioning whether or not peoples in the autonomous regions of China are 'Chinese' that should follow domestic laws or 'non-Chinese' to be supported by UNESCO-UN conventions. For these discussions, it may be helpful to remember that these areas have traditionally been an interest zone of Western colonial powers since the time of the Great Game.

An alternative train of thought is that from the Chinese point of view, the Western culture is the Other in the face of the longstanding Chinese tradition, which itself may undergo a process of internalisation or Sinification through modernisation – a self-willing and self-propelling cultural (re)engineering or a selective 'Westernisation' without the presence of the West, as seen in the case

[203] The writing principle for this specific convention of history composition is that 'the official dynasty history cannot be written by its own contemporaries, but the ones of the next dynasty'. For example, the history of official history of Song dynasty is written b Yuan dynasty and the official history of Yuan dynasty by the Ming dynasty, and so on. See Huimeng Nie (聶溦萌), The Operation and Evolvement of Ancient and Medieval Official Dynasty Histories (中古官修史體制的運作與演進), Shanghai, 2021.

study of women's fashion and art in the fifth article. Following this line of thought, it is possible that one day postcolonial cultural criticism would lose its validity in the Chinese context when the hybrid style is seamless without clear cuts between the Western and the Chinese cultural elements. But until that day arrives, the validity of (de)coloniality should remain intact in the Sinosphere, as well as in other non-Western worlds envisaged further development in the globalised neoliberal market economics in the post-conflict era.

4.3 Future Research

4.3.1 Return of Investment from Emerging Economy

Observing the Chinese contemporary art game as discussed in section 3.1.1, it is worth noting that 'returning the collections to China' or 'keep the collections inside China' has been utilised by the patron-investor-collectors of Chinese contemporary art (CCA), such as Uli Sigg or Guy Ullens, to persuade local artists, audiences, critics and buyers (including local governments, as Hong Kong instead of Beijing or Shanghai turned out to close the eventual deal with Sigg and the configuration of M+ Museum project) either to sell (at cheap prices), to support or celebrate and to pay (at extraordinarily high prices) for their holdings as estimated by the Western auction houses as Sotheby's or Christie's. Two significant factors contributing to the success of this ideological marketing strategy are the following: (1) the Chinese-authorised heritage discourse has been formed since the turn of the last millennium to support the demand for the repatriation of those national treasures lost to the West (especially the universal museums) during the Age of New Imperialism[204]; and (2) it has been unlikely that Sigg and Ullens would sell their so-called prestigious collections as a whole or individually to any of the to-be-established public art museums in the West – given that at the time repatriation of important collections in China was enjoying a mix of private and national funds to support and facilitate such an acquisition (buying back) from Western auction houses and antique markets, and Western art museums have long been governed under strict laws (such as museum acts or various fiscal laws) as well as with meticulous curatorship under the supervision of government authorities and the general public. Despite the question of whether those CCA collections of Sigg or Ullens in warehouses in China should be valued the same as those lost national treasures in the basements of universal museums in the West, the marketing concept of 'returning back to China' has proved successful, as seen in the eventual deals with Hong Kong and with those Chinese nouveau riche who won the bids at Sotheby's or Christie's. However, the key to generating the mega return on investment for those foreign (in)direct investments of contemporary art in China is in actuality the exponential economic development of the country, moving from being an agriculture society

[204] Zuozhen. Liu, *Case for Repatriating China's Cultural Objects* (Singapore: Springer, 2016).

to the world's industry and a global industrialised powerhouse within a relatively short period of time. In this light, the success story of Sigg or Ullens may not have been so successful had the economic miracle of post-Mao China not occurred as it did, especially within the two decades from 1989 to 2012. This assumption remains to be verified by future studies on whether or not such a Chinese experience or the Sigg and Ullens narrative can be repeated with the contemporary art in the developing economies of non-Western countries in Southeast Asia, the Middle East or Africa.

4.3.2 New Orientalism and Neo-colonialism in Non-Western Cultures

As mentioned, while generating rich ROI and contributing to a local ecosystem and infrastructure for the art industry and economy, the FiDI in CCA may have seemed to devise a certain sociopolitical ideology of universal norms and value towards a liberal China. By favouring the political pop and activist art, the international market of CCA in a subtle way has advocated the Western concept and practice of democracy and human rights through the market language of the art game. The patronage and collaboration between Uli Sigg and Ai Weiwei (as discussed in section 3.1.1) provides a clear example of this. To date, little is known about the social impacts of their collaboration, but a lot has been said by the market results of it. Especially when it was became public that Sigg was cashing out from the Chinese market at the seemingly right moment – before the rise of the Chinese Dream, which started a slow-down of unregulated growth in the contemporary art economy with improved art laws as well as tightening censorship towards the art and culture under the domestic policy of the Chinese Cultural Renaissance. From a historical viewpoint, it is justifiable to regard those Western tycoons of CCA, like Sigg or Ullens, as some sort of new Orientalists. As their predecessors in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (for example, Emil Guimet, as mentioned in section 3.2.2) who ventured to the East and joined the race for antiquities (as Pelliot or Stein), these new Orientalists ventured into the emerging economies (the developing countries and the former colonies or semi-colonies) in the late 20th and early 21st centuries and duplicated the art game of the capitalist market system in the Anglo-American style within the CCA. While the former collected massive exquisite historical artefacts that were nationalised into their own national museums (later renamed as universal museums in the post-conflict era), the latter gathered huge quantities of newly made art pieces and liquidated them via local markets in an attempt to get them nationalised by local governments. While the old Orientalists hunted for exotic cultural objects, the new ones sought equally exotic contemporary artworks (with so-called authentic or ethnographic non-Western cultural features), such as Chinese political pop, Iranian feminism or Indian symbolism. Both the old and the new Orientalists have contributed to globalising and universalising the intellectual tradition and knowledge system of the West to non-Western traditions, and manoeuvred towards a similar end – to assimilate or convert the art traditions of the Other into the Western cultural system. It is unknown still whether the contemporary art of the Other will become a national treasure in the country of

origin as those important collections of the universal museums, and eventually become the cultural heritage of all mankind (enjoying the protection of international charters, conventions and laws) as claimed and devised by the Western-led heritage preservation and management agencies affiliated with UNESCO UN. But the core question for future studies to answer is whether the unarmed economic power of the West embodied by the new Orientalists now is comparable to the armed one embodied by the old ones a century ago. In other words, will the globalised neoliberal market economics achieve a neo-colonisation as many have suspected?

4.3.3 Prospects for Brightening Up the Darker Side

After this study on the argument that 'the Chinese contemporary art is the medium is the message of coloniality', whether a de-linking or decoloniality is happening or to happening should be examined. One way is to verify this is to see whether the tastes of those Western patron-investor-collectors would be continued by their Chinese successors who took over the art game. By far, it seems that these local players are taking further the Anglo-American model of art enterprise by establishing art foundations and museums but with their own specific collecting strategies and education programmes. For example, the Long Museum in Shanghai was reputed for its collection of Red (i.e. revolutionary) art[205] as well as for its traditional art'[206] in addition to its CCA. Another way is to examine the question is to see whether the market performance of CCA will become strong again.[207] As a matter of fact, it is noticeable that the market value of 'national (or Chinese) painting' made in the modern days has been increasing exponentially in recent years, as seen in the prices paid for works by Liu Guosong (1932–). In addition, more and more Chinese contemporary artists and art critics began to contemplate the notion of tradition with their art making and writing. These may serve as a signal for a potential movement of delinking and decoloniality in CCA. In fact, by the end of 2010s, the total number of art students in China has broken all previous records since 1977, when the national higher education entrance examination was reinstalled after the Cultural Revolution. The aforementioned museum boom in China has also seemed to continue. It is likely that CCA will not wither after the retreat of FiDI but instead it will have a new direction – considering the declaration of Xi about the Chinese Dream with the Belt and Road Initiative and the Chinese Cultural Renaissance[208] and the departure of the superstar of CCA, the Ai God.[209] The latter attracted a

[205] O'Connor and Gu.
[206] 'Long Museum', *Long Museum*.
[207] Anna Brady, 'Censorship Could Stifle China's Art Market', *The Art Newspaper*, 27 November 2018.
[208] *Anthology of Xi about the Chinese Dream (習近平關於實現中國民族偉大復興的中國夢論述摘編)* (中央文獻出版社, 2013); William A. Callahan, 'History, Tradition and the China Dream: Socialist Modernization in the World of Great Harmony', *Journal of Contemporary China*, 24.96 (2015), 983–1001.
[209] Bin (杜斌) Tu, *Ai God (艾神)* (Hong Kong: Orign Pulbishing (溯源書社), 2012).

phenomenal fandom (especially in Hong Kong) with his artistic social activism[210] on human rights inside China – for Europe, where his new art focus on the social issue of the migrant crisis has seemed to enjoy far less celebration in the Western contemporary art world. it is intriguing to see whether CCA will attain any avant-garde features as political pop did in the post-1989 epoch in the coming future. However, it is not necessarily unwelcome for the Chinese art world to develop a diversified art system different from the one modelled on the Anglo-American one with more traditional elements. Such a shift can be regarded as a potential development of delinking or decoloniality that would brighten up the darker side and/or deep world of contemporary art in China.

[210] Weiwei Ai, 'Ai Weiwei: The Artwork That Made Me the Most Dangerous Person in China', *The Guardian* (London, 15 February 2018).

SUMMARY

The brief history of Chinese contemporary art (CCA) from the opening-up policy to the rise of Chinese Dream has embodied the drastic change of the country from an agriculture based society to the world's factory and a global powerhouse. During this period, the institutional voids and shifting social paradigm from planned economics to state capitalism (market economics of socialism with Chinese characteristics) yielded great opportunities for the 'darker side (of modernity)' and/or 'dark (deep) world (of fine art)' to take shape in the emerging art economy of post-Mao China. This compilation thesis is one of the first endeavours that makes and endorse such an argument by studying the sociology of CCA from a global perspective of entangled history in the Sinosphere—the other side of the globalised market oriented neoliberalism. Applying mixed methods of historical-interpretive, philosophical analysis, case study and visual analysis, the research represents a novel approach with the conceptual framework backboned by the postcolonial criticism of Mignolo and the media theory of McLuhan and structured with five sub theoretical notions—foreign (in)direct investment, valorisation (value creation, value added and value chain), political economy, white-cube phenomenology and gender equality—to enlighten the three key dimensions in the making of Chinese contemporary art history: market, politics and gender (social relevance). To decode the Chinese contemporary 'art game', two articles have been published—*Foreign (In)Direct Investment in Chinese Contemporary Art Game: The Case Studies of Uli Sigg, Guy Ullens and Beyond, 1989-2013* and *Understanding the Ranking of Chinese Contemporary Art.* The former discussed the correlation between global market, foreign investment and emerging economy, and the latter the process of valorisation in terms of the market, artistic and social values of CCA within the ecosystem or infrastructure of (contemporary) art industry. To comprehend the impacts of (inter)national politics to the arts and culture (of Self and the Other), the two articles are *Turning Right/Turning Left? A Neoclassical Socio-economic Query of Art Institutes in Finland* and *Museum Colonially: Displaying Asian Art in the Whitened Context.* The former investigated the alternative model for the development of (contemporary) art in the welfare society of Finland's, differing from the Anglo-American style. The latter tackled the cultural phenomenon of coloniality manifested in the muséographie of white-cube, adopted by the universal museums and spread to the countries of origin in pursuit of modernity. To have a glimpse on the social relevance of contemporary art in China, the fifth article *Fashioning Chinese Feminism: Women and Their Art in Modern China in the 20th Century* dealt with the question of women rights or feminism in the making of Chinese art history throughout the long 20th century. The findings and results constituted and substantiated the thesis statement—Chinese contemporary art is the medium is the message of a cultural coloniality—which provides a comprehensive observation, timely and crucial as well to the contemporary art worlds in non-Western traditions like Southeast Asia or Middle East facing globalisation, or neo-colonisation.

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ORIGINAL PAPERS

I

FOREIGN (IN)DIRECT INVESTMENT IN CHINESE CONTEMPORARY ART GAME: THE CASE STUDIES OF ULI SIGG, GUY ULLENS AND BEYOND, 1989-2013

by

Shuchen Wang, 2021

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Foreign (In)Direct Investment in Chinese Contemporary Art Game: The Case Studies of Uli Sigg, Guy Ullens and beyond, 1989-2013

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ABSTRACT

The boom in Chinese contemporary art is the result of China's opening to foreign investment and private entrepreneurship in 1978, and the significant contribution by the transnational art enterprises of long-term patron-investor-collectors, such as Uli Sigg and Guy Ullens, between approximately 1989 and 2013. Through the opportunity offered by the gap between the private market mechanism and national heritage process for the "art game", these investors used a variation of the controversial "Saatchi model" to generate high ROI. A further effect has been to bring CCA onto the global stage and complete the ecosystem of the art industry, building a foundation for the art economy of post-Mao China.

KEYWORDS

Chinese contemporary art; art industry infrastructure; foreign (in) direct investment; Saatchi model; Uli Sigg; Guy Ullens; art game; heritage process

Introduction

Objective and background

The thriving market for Chinese contemporary art (CCA) has crystallized the country's fast development from an emerging economy to a global powerhouse following the opening-up policy for foreign investment and private entrepreneurship. The objective of this study is to examine how foreign (in)direct investment (FiDI) has penetrated opportunities rendered by institutional voids in developing countries like China. Viewing the "art game" as based on the so-called Saatchi model of value creation, FiDI played a key role in globalizing contemporary art to non-Western cultures while generating rich return of investment (ROI). It also helped to complete the ecosystem and infrastructure of the art industry in China and make contemporary art a future heritage for local peoples. A clear example of this practice can be found in the actions of two long-term patron-investor-collectors—the self-made man Uli Sigg (1946-) from Switzerland and the multimillionaire Baron Guy Ullens de Schooten Whettnall (1935-) from Belgium. They were active approximately between 1989 and 2013, after the Tiananmen Square protests and before the Belt and Road Initiative, when the market confidence remained strong due to China's development strategy, which was upheld by the political order and country's foreign policy (Friedberg 2018).

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In retrospect, the development of CCA served as a window through which to view the radical sociocultural change of China in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. After the social reforms of 1978, the loosened control of the central government in higher education and the job market gave way to the rise of a market-oriented art making and consumption. Instead of leaving the metropolitan areas (where the leading art academies were located) for assigned jobs, young art graduates were able to break the Hukou system (household registration) by becoming professional artists—which formed a tireless source of art production for an art market yet to emerge. One early sign of such a phenomenon was the establishment of young artists groups, such as No-Name and Stars in Beijing, Grass in Shanghai and Wild Meadow in Chongqing. Lacking exhibition venues, most of the artworks were shown at artists' homes, which resulted in so-called "apartment art" (Gao 1999) and CCA had its debut (Lü 2009). Instead of official art authorities like the China Artists Association, established in 1949 and chaired by "national artists" (for example, Xu Bei-Hong), these young artists feverishly copied and explored Western art styles according to newly allowed publications from the West. The *Exhibition of Chinese Modern Art* at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing in 1989 was a milestone summarizing this golden decade of CCA in the 1980s—where multiplicity seemed possible to replace uniformity in politics (Gao 1999, 2011). However, the exhibition turned out to be the end of it, as it was abruptly shut down by police due to the improvised gunshots of the participating artist Xiao Lu for her installation *Dialogue*. A few months after the exhibition, the bloodshed at Tiananmen Square occurred. Many artist-protestors fled the country to the West, heading to France, Australia and the USA, among other places. As Deng stood by his reforms, in 1990 the Shanghai Stock Market was reopened (closed since 1949) and the Shenzhen Stock Market established. Foreign investment and privatization accelerated and the private sector began to grow exponentially as a percentage of GDP. The market economy of CCA was no exception. Following the very first art auction of contemporary China held by the Hôtel Drouot from France at the Great Hall of the People in 1989; the first commercial gallery Red Gate was founded by the Australian Brian Wallace in Beijing in 1991, the first art biennale in Guangzhou was held in 1992 and the first local auction house China Guardian Auctions in Beijing opened in 1993. From this point on, the ecosystem and infrastructure of a market-oriented art industry began to rapidly develop in China, thanks to significant contributions of FiDI flooding in from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Singapore and especially the West (Liu 2019) through the actor-agents of the art economy, including dealers, gallerists, auctioneers, critics, and journalists, as well as investor-collectors in particular. These art professionals then brought CCA centerstage in the global contemporary art scene (Wang 2013), consisting of longstanding art fairs, biennales and museum exhibitions such as ARCO, FIAC, Frieze, Art Basel, *Venice Biennale*, *documenta*, MoMA, Whitney Museum and Tate Modern. In the meanwhile, they contributed to turning contemporary art into a future cultural heritage by building up new museums, galleries and art centers in China and Hong Kong.

Conceptual framework

The phenomenon described above has attracted extensive scholarly interest. However, most of them have focused on the writing of art history per se (Wu 2014; Zhou

2020), covering questions such as motives (Gao 2012), cultural significance (Huang 2014) and gender (Wiseman 2010; Welland 2018). In the growing literature of cultural economics (Towse 2014; Zorloni 2013), a few have concentrated on CCA (Joy and Sherry 2004; Robertson 2005; DeBevoise 2014). Although the impacts on the CCA market from China's political system (Robertson 2018) and from the entrepreneurship of foreign patron-mediators in business management (Betzler and Camina 2020) have been analyzed, the topic has not been examined unequivocally from the perspective of FDI—a specific business concept and practice critical for emerging market countries. This study bridges this critical gap in knowledge. According to the International Monetary Fund, FDI is defined as when an individual or business owns ten percent or more of a foreign company. The term conventionally indicates (1) capital invested in a country that provides manufacturing and service capabilities for both native consumers and world markets, (2) investor confidence in a specific business and in the geopolitical climate of the host country, and (3) connecting to national economics and benefiting both the capital suppliers and the host regions. The term FDI is used in this article in its widest sense. As data from the World Bank has indicated, FDI has been drastically increasing in the post-conflict era with the expansion of global markets into those countries that were formerly behind the Iron (Bamboo) Curtain. By far, China has been one of biggest recipients of FDI. This has manifested in many business sectors, including art. Although data and information on the art business often remain opaque, it is evident that FDI has played a crucial role in initiating China's own art economy, not to mention its close connection to the global art market. In the in-flow of FiDI toward commercial galleries, auction houses and museum spaces, two major CCA patron-investor-collectors—Uli Sigg and Guy Ullens—formed a dominating force that guided the entire industry during the last decade of the 20th century and the first of the 21st. It is worth noting that the grand operation of FiDI in the post-socialist China, a developing country under a dictatorship, appeared to be feasible exclusively for prominent figures like Sigg and Ullens who already had a certain socio-political *guan-xi* (relationship) with the local government prior to their art enterprises. The implied complexity, manipulativeness and opportunism of FDI in CCA, a result of the shifting social paradigms and system of political economy in contemporary China, characterize the term "art game" used in this study. One important reference for the term is "heritage game," devised by cultural economists in the 2000s (Peacock and Rizzo 2008). In additoin, the concept of business ecosystem or infrastructure (Hayes and Boyle 2021) is employed to denote the business chain of the art industry (Figure 1)—a network of organizations including suppliers, distributors, customers, competitors, government agencies, and so on.

Methodology and result

Investigating the intriguing relationship between FDI and CCA, this paper applies an (art) historical-interpretive method with two cases (of quasi-biographic) studies in addition to content analysis. Following the actor-agent network theory, it studies the direct and indirect materials gathered from relevant art organizations, publications and the press and media centered with Uli Sigg and Guy Ullens and their respective proxy-agents

Figure 1. The ecosystem of art industry in market economy.

Ai Weiwei and Fei Dawei. While scrutinizing the information of short-term and long-term FiDI in CCA, a comparative study is carried out to identify a general business model of the (in)directly-associated transnational art enterprises of Sigg and Ullens and their peers from Western Europe and North America. In an inductive approach, theory-building is achieved from this comparison—the "Saatchi model" of value creation in the globalized contemporary art market. This refers to the practice of buying art at low price in a large quantity from the primary market within a relatively short period of time, then exhibiting them with well-established (public) cultural institutions and then selling them at a high price monopolistically in the secondary market. The stock market logic of "buying low and selling high" was first appropriated in the art business world in this manner by the co-founder of what was once the world's biggest advertising agency, Charles Saatchi (1943-), in the early 1990s in Britain with the YBA (Young British Artists). The author has thus named this practice the "Saatchi model", which can be identified in the FiDI of Sigg and Ullens and others in CCA, though maybe less recognizably so due to various socio-cultural barriers across borders.

The discreet art game

The diplomat's hunting

With the *Law of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Equity Joint Ventures* passed by the 5th National Congress, Uli Sigg went to Beijing representing the Schindler Group. In the belief that "China needs an example to tell the world that investing capital and technology is viable" (Jun 2018), Sigg achieved China's very first industrial joint venture in 1980. Over a decade and a half, he strived for business success, overcoming enormous sociocultural conflicts. Yet it is not until 1995, when he entered the political realm (as the ambassador of Switzerland), that he cast his eye on China's cultural scene and noticed the budding market of CCA. Instead of buying from galleries in Hong Kong or Europe like others, Sigg frequented the artists' studios, just as Saatchi had done in the UK, and purchased there directly, often in cash. Being a diplomat in Beijing at that time (1995-1998), Sigg practically turned his embassy into an art salon displaying the latest finds of his evening and weekend art cruises. After his term ended in 1998, Sigg kept visiting China every year, engaging in various business deals and investments, all the while continuing to collect art. By 2010, he was acquainted with more than 1,000 artists and amassed almost 2,000 artworks (Liu 2018) with an ambition to (1) build a documentary-like systematic collection, (2) tour the exhibition of his collection to the West, and (3) complete the ecosystem of contemporary art industry in China (Zhu 2012). It is worth noting that in 1995, when he started collecting, the memory of the pro-democracy movement crushed by the Chinese military at Tiananmen Square was still fresh. Passionate young artists often poured their frustrations out onto the canvas and thus created Chinese political pop (an art movement combining Western pop art with socialist realism to question the political and social climate of the rapidly changing country), as seen in the artworks of Beijing East Village—a short-lived politically motivated arts collective in the early 1990s, joined by Ai Weiwei after his return from New York in 1993 (Barboza and Zhang 2006). In spite of buying their art, Sigg made a comment that "the students meant well but the protests made the country regress for a decade" (Jun 2018).

A shared adventure, 1995 to 2010

In 1995, Uli Sigg and Ai Weiwei met, and their subsequent collaboration led them to great success: with the former becoming the godfather of CCA (Shou 2008) and the latter the most known Chinese artist-dissident the Ai God (Tu 2012), ranked in the Power 100. Their shared journey from 1995 to 2010 also provides an annotation to how FiDI has worked hand in hand with local entrepreneurship in the emerging art economy of post-Mao China through an expert network, though discreetly. In addition to being a founding president of the Chamber of Commerce Switzerland-China (in 1980) and the venture capital company Asia Pacific, Sigg was also the board member of diverse businesses in media (Ringier), industry (Vitra), finance (the China Development Bank) and art (the International Council of MoMA, the International Advisory Council of Tate Gallery and the Musée Guimet) (Li 2012). This long list indicates the powerful influence Sigg wielded behind the global stage of CCA—with the indispensable

contribution of Ai Weiwei. In 1995, Ai co-edited a three-volume art journal—the *Black, White and Gray Books*—published by Timezone 8, an art publishing house and bookstore created by the American Robert Bernell in the 798 Contemporary Art District. In 1998, Ai co-founded the nonprofit Art Archives and Warehouse in Beijing with the Dutch curator Hans van Dijck. In 1999, the two together with the Belgian art dealer Frank Uytterhaegen established the Modern Chinese Art Foundation in Ghent. In the same year, Ai participated in the *48th Venice Biennale*. In 2000, Ai built the Warehouse in Caochangdi, which led him to open his architectural design firm, Fake. In 2002, he collaborated with Herzog and de Meuron from Switzerland on the Beijing National Stadium proposal of 2008 Olympic Games (Jiang 2009). In 2003, Ai became represented by Galérie Urs Meile, a commercial gallery headquartered in Lucerne with a branch in in Beijing. In 2005, he co-curated the exhibition *Mahjong: Contemporary Chinese Art from The Sigg Collection*, which toured in Switzerland, Germany, Austria and the USA. In 2007, Ai attended the *Documenta 12* in Kassel with the art project *Fairytale* (Li 2007). In 2010, the Tate Modern in London hosted his solo installation, *Sunflower Seeds* at the Turbine Hall.

Art promotion, value creation

Cross-examining the art careers of Uli Sigg and Ai Weiwei, traces are identified of a common effort to promote CCA (with Sigg's collection and Ai's curating and art) to the West. In fact, in 1995, when their shared journey began, the CCA market was just starting to grow: the Red Gate gallery had opened four years previously in 1991, the show *China's New Art, Post-1989* was co-organized by Johnson Chang (a leading gallerist in Hong Kong) in 1993 and *China Avant-Garde*, curated by Andreas Schmid, Hans van Dijk and Jochen Noth had just toured Berlin, Rotterdam, Oxford and Odense from 1993 to 1994. After three years of intensive collecting, Sigg set up the Chinese Contemporary Art Award (CCAA) in Beijing in 1998, inviting Harald Szeemann (and Ai Weiwei) as judge, who also served as the artistic director in 1999 for the *48th Venice Biennale* (also in 2001 for the 49th), where CCA was included for the very first time. It was also a time when this world famous biennale transformed from a state-run convention to a private enterprise in response to the emerging contemporary art fair *Art Basel* (Adam 2019). Through Sigg, Ai became connected with Bernhard Fibicher, the director of Kunsthalle Bern and Hans Ulrich Obrist, the artistic curator of Serpentine Gallery in London (in addition to the Swiss architect Herzog and de Meuron)—Fibicher hosted Ai's very first solo show (in 2004) and Obrist began to publish his writings about him. In 2005, Sigg commissioned Ai to co-curate the above-mentioned exhibition *Mahjong*, which until 2009 was shown at the Kunstmuseum Bern, the Hamburg Kunsthalle in Hamburg, the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona, the USC Berkeley Art Museum and the Peabody Essex Museum near Boston. In 2007, Sigg introduced Ai to Ruth Noark, who included Ai's *Fairytale* in the well-known *Documenta 12* in Kassel, Yet it has remained little known that this gigantic art project was actually sponsored by the gallerist Urs Miele, who made a deal with two financial funds in Switzerland under the agreement that the loan should be returned with interest once the market price of Ai's art increased (Zhu 2011). In 2009, Chris Dercon (a judge of CCAA in 2006 and 2008) held a solo show for Ai in Kunsthalle Munich. In 2010, another of Ai's gigantic projects, the aforementioned *Sunflower Seeds*, was hosted by Tate Modern

(where Sigg was a member of the International Council). Sponsored by Unilever (Bingham 2010), *Sunflower Seeds* has produced "sellable items"—150 tons of porcelain seeds handmade by more than 1,600 artisans in Jingdezhen over a period of almost three years with every single one of them crafted out of the kaolin through a 30-step procedure. Spread all over the floor of the Turbine Hall, the show was well-received in London (Etherington 2010). Immediately after the show, a series of sales began, with the first lot—a hundred-kilo pile—going for USD 56,000 at Sotheby's in New York (Vogel 2011), the highest market record of Ai's art. In 2012, eight million seeds were purchased by Tate Modern under the auspices of the Art Fund Charity (Kennedy 2012). With the price set by the secondary market, the rest of the seeds were offered in the primary market by commercial galleries such as the Danish Galleri Faurschou. As the prices for Ai's art increased, it meant a rise in the vaule of Sigg's collection. Just as Ai's art reached its highest market price, Sigg began seeking ways to "return his collection to China" (Li 2012). In 2012, Sigg made a deal with the government of Hong Kong (rather than Beijing or Shanghai), which agreed to buy 47 fine pieces for USD 22.9 million and receive another 1,463 educational pieces (with an estimated value of USD 170 million according to Sotheby's) for the yet to be built M + museum (Balfour 2012; Li 2012).

Nonprofit operation for profit

From antiquarianism to the contemporary art game

Born to Baron Jean Ullens de Schooten Whettnall (a Belgian nobleman and diplomat to China) and Baroness Marie née Wittouck (a fellow of Royal Geographic Society and daughter of a distilling and sugar magnate), Guy Ullens earned a BA in Law at the Catholic University of Louvain in 1958 and an MBA at Stanford in 1960. Starting with creating Eurocan in Mechelen, he joined the family business R. T. Holding the conglomerate in food industries (Tiense Suiker, SES and bank) and created the Artal Group Luxemburg which carried out an FDI in the Mankattan company in China in 1995. Ullens began collecting art with a wide interest just as the traditional antiquarians had during the Belle Époque. In the 1980s, through the Chinese antique dealer Christian Deydier in Paris and Guiseppe Eskenazi in London as well as the Chinese art consultant Wu Erlu, he started to buy prestigious Chinese classic paintings dating from the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing period. In 1991, he bought his first Chinese contemporary artwork from the aforementioned HK art dealer Johnson Chang. In 2002, in addition to bidding for the painting of Emperor Song Huizong (1082-1135) from China Guardian in Beijing (*Art Market Journal* 2019), Ullens organized an exhibition of CCA—*Paris-Pekin: The Private Collection of Myriam and Guy Ullens* (with 120 pieces)—at the Espace Cardin in Paris and met the Chinese art critic and curator Fei Dawei. Becoming his consultant, Fei advised him to sponsor the exhibition *Le moine et le démon,* co-organized by Guangdong Museum of Art and Museum of Fine Arts of Lyon, as well as the exhibition *Zone of Urgency,* curated by Hou Hanru for the *Venice Biennale*. In 2003, the Foundation Guy & Myriam Ullens was registered in Switzerland with Fei as the director in Paris to build a systematic collection of CCA. In 2005, the foundation sponsored China's first ever national pavilion at the *Venice Biennale* and Fei started looking for places in Shanghai and Beijing to build a

warehouse—which turned out to be a kunsthalle-like space. Between 2003 and 2007, around 1,700 pieces were hoarded by the foundation (Xie 2011).

Connecting Chinese contemporary art, fashion and entertainment

In November 2007, under the presence of Prince of the Belgians Philippe Léopold Louis Marie, the museum-like space called the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA)—designed by the architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte and located in the 798 Contemporary Art District—was inaugurated with the exhibition *'85 New Wave: The Birth of Chinese Contemporary Art,* curated by Fei, who nonetheless left UCCA and the foundation four months later. His successor, Jérôrme Sans (a former co-founder of Palais de Tokyo) on the very same day of the 2008 Beijing Olympic opening ceremony then greeted the audience of UCCA with an informal talk *Becoming: Image of Beijing's Air Terminal 3, A Dialogue of Norman Foster and Ai Weiwei* where the Ullens couple were sitting in the first row, and a special exhibition *Our Future: The Guy & Myriam Ullens Foundation Collection* to declare Ullens's long-term commitment to Chinese artists (UCCA 2008). Topped off with a crystal chandelier designed by Ai Weiwei, the following special exhibition of UCCA was the dazzling *Christian Dior and Chinese Artists*—for which, the exhibition room was literally turned into a futuristic movie setting forged by Timmy Yip Kam-tim, the well-known art director and designer for fiction films from Hong Kong. More than 100 Dior Couture pieces were sent from Paris to bring glamor to UCCA to build "a dialogue between contemporary art and fashion" and the red carpet gala dinner was participated in by top-tier celebrities from around the world, including Charlize Theron, Marion Cotillard, Evan Green, Maggie Cheung and Michelle Yeoh. In this way, UCCA immediately became *the* landmark of CCA in mainland China.

Outside the kunsthalle

The sudden change of director and shakeup of management was a result of the radical turn of organizational mission from being a nonprofit kunsthalle to a for-profit art business, when Ullens announced a reset of the financial targets of UCCA as moving to the breakeven point from 2003 to 2010—which meant that within two years from 2008 to 2010, UCCA should generate six-million euros annually to cover its costs (Gill 2008). Although claiming to be a nonprofit organization, UCCA in actuality was registered as a for-profit company in China. in fact, the original plan for the opening exhibition that Ullens preferred was not *'85 New Wave* but *Whitney Biennial*—the former was an art history based curatorial practice and the latter a market-oriented art show. In 2010, at the same time when Ai's art reached the highest market price in the West and Sigg began to "return" his collection, Ullens also started to sell his (owned by his foundation instead of UCCA) in China. In 2011, the first lot, comprising 106 pieces, was sold at Sotheby's Hong Kong, and the intention to sell UCCA was also expressed (with or without the condition to keep the name of it). In 2016, a deal for UCCA was finalized, selling it for RMB 100 million to a group of local investors, including Future Edutainment (under Lunar Capital) and Focus Media. A UCCA-specific

foundation was then registered in Hong Kong as a tax-exempt nonprofit organization (Liu and Lu 2017). In 2017, UCCA had a mega refurbishment designed by Chris van Duijn OMA. Between 2009 and 2017, nine auction sales of Ullens's Chinese collection were concluded inside China, with significant ROI: in 2009, a work by Chen Yifei was sold at Poly Beijing for RMB 40,432,000, a painting of Emperor Song Huizong went for RMB 61.7 million and a Wu Bing sold for RMB 16.9 million. In 2011, a Zhang Xiaogang was sold at Sotheby's Hong Kong for HKD 79 million, and in 2013, a Zheng Feizhi fetched HKD 180 million (Gao 2017).

The marketplace

Creating the market in the 1990s

The FiDI (with long-term transaction) represented by Uli Sigg and Guy Ullens has played a crucial role in securing the market confidence of CCA in Switzerland, Hong Kong, the USA and the UK during the second half of the 2000s (Art and Finance 2016). Examining the major exhibitions of CCA endorsed by leading art dealers and the prominent results of auction sales, it is made explicit that the CCA market was initiated first in the francophone area of Europe and through Hong Kong expanded to China via a handful of Anglo-American short-term investments. After the shutting down of the said *Exhibition of Chinese Modern Art* at the National Art Museum of China and the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989, available venues to show CCA were limited to those underground non-official spaces in mainland China and a few commercial art galleries abroad in pre-1997 Hong Kong and Europe. The aforementioned exhibition *China's New Art, Post-1989,* co-curated by Johnson Chang in 1993 in Hong Kong, was a prelude to the market trend. Through Hans van Dijck, Jean-Marc Decrop (the former cultural attaché of France in Hong Kong) became a shareholder (venture capitalist) of Chang's gallery in Taipei (1995-2000) and an investor-collector of hundreds of CCA artworks. Another French-speaking gallerist based in Geneva, Pierre Hubert (who was once a committee member of Art Basel and later director of SHContemporary), was an early European art dealer and gallerist concentrating on CCA (starting from 1993) with a focus on the overseas Chinese young artists, such as Cheng Zhen, Yen Peiming and Wang Du, who left China after 1989. Howard Farber, who started to buy CCA in 1995 through Johnson Chang, Robert Bernell and Karen Smith, also became one of the earliest dealers of CCA in the West. He had been a real estate businessman and owned the gallery Chinese-art.com in New York and Miami Beach.

Market expansion in the 2000s

After the turn of the last millennium, the market for CCA began to expand. In 2002, Christopher Tsai, a hedge fund manager in New York, began investing in CCA. In 2003, Fritz Kaiser, owner of a finance management company from Switzerland, also joined the trend, through Uli Sigg and Lorenz Helbing (the owner of the Shanghart Gallery established in 1996). Between 2004 and 2007, John Fernandez hoarded a large

amount of CCA works with a few million dollars through galleries in New York and London. In 2005, Sylvain and Dominique Levy in France began to build the DSL collection, comprising major works of around 200 Chinese contemporary artists (shown online as a virtual museum). In 2006, Michael Gagosian, ranked second in the Power 100 and owner of the Gagosian Gallery in London and New York, bought a work by Xu Bing with USD 408,000 from the very first sale of Asian contemporary art through Sotheby's—which marked his entry into the CCA market. In 2007, Howard Farber sold 44 pieces through a special sale *China Avant-Garde: The Farber Collection*, through the auction house Philips de Pury in London. In addition, William Acquavella, one of the Forbes top ten art dealers and owner of Acquavella Galleries in New York, also entered the market, along with Charles Saatchi, the maker of the YBA, who tried to catch the trend through Saatchi Art, an online gallery based in Los Angeles. Other lesser-known Western short-term investor-collectors of CCA included the Australian Judith Neilson, the Austrian collectors Agnes and Karlheinz Essl as well as the Dutch collectors Marcel Brient and Sue Stoffel. Together with these Western buyers, the FiDI of commercial galleries in Beijing and Shanghai composed a close actor-agent network that oriented the development of China's contemporary art economy. The names of these FiDI and private galleries included Mario Christiani, Lorenzo Fiaschi and Maurisio Riggilo of Continua, Alexander Ochs of White Space, Waling Boers of Boers-Li Gallery, Pace Gallery, Cohen Gallery and the aforementioned Red Gate Gallery as well as the publishing house Time Zone 8. It is made explicit that the CCA market expanded drastically through the collective effort of such a network, centered around Western art professionals, especially the said short-term investor-collectors of art dealing and financial backgrounds.

The rise of the local art industry and economy

As the global market for CCA expanded, China's art economy and the domestic mechanism and infrastructure of the art industry was taking shape as well. This has been well illustrated by the rise of the aforementioned 798 Contemporary Art District in Beijing (and similar settings in cities such as Shanghai, Chongqing, and Guangzhou). In 2002, the first artist's studio was permitted to be established in 798, as well as the first foreign gallery, the Beijing Tokyo Art Project (Arton 2012). By the time UCCA was inaugurated, dozens of local galleries and art-related businesses had been founded in 798. Although the artist's studios and galleries began to move out after around 2010, when 798 became an expensive tourist destination, a boom in private art museums took place in China with the nouveau-riche becoming art-patrons or long-term investor-collectors like Uli Sigg and Guy Ullens. The most known ones included the multimillionaire couple Wang Wei and Liu Yiqian, who founded the Long Museum in Shanghai in 2012; Lu Jun, the president of Nanjing Sifang Construction Industry Company Ltd, founded the Sifang Art Museum in Nanjing in 2013; Adrian Cheng, the real estate developer from Hong Kong, established the K11 art foundation and art spaces in several cities; Wang Zongjun, an entertainment tycoon, founded the Song Art Museum in Beijing in 2017; and Zheng Hao, a hotel owner, founded the How Museum in Shanghai in 2017.

Discussion and conclusion

Discussion of case studies

The value creation of Chinese contemporary art

Studying the aforementioned long-term and short-term patronage-investment-collecting of CCA has made explicit that the line between the two based on their transaction timespan has become thiner because both of them are using the same methodology of value creation—the Saatchi model. As introduced earlier, it was invented by Charles Saatchi, who applied the logic of the stock market to his art business with young British artists (YBA) during the 1990s in the UK. In 1992, Saatchi Gallery organized a group show of YBA (including Damien Hirst) in London. Within five years, Saatchi hoarded a massive amount of YBA works either directly from the artist studios that he frequented on weekends or indirectly from the gallerists such as Jay Japling, Douglas Baxter, Sadie Coles, Anthony d'Offay, Larry Gagosian and Leo Casteli. Between 1997 and 2000, he sponsored the tour exhibition *Sensation: Young Artists from the Saatchi Collection* in three well-established art institutes: the Royal Academy of Arts in London, the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart (part of the Berlin National Gallery) in Berlin and the Brooklyn Museum in New York. Right after the show, he began to sell his holdings through auctions with prices far above cost (Tien 2011). This model of value creation in contemporary art became legendary instantly and caused bitter controversy.

The operation of Pierre Huber on CCA, as discussed, has demonstrated a clear resemblance—first hoarding works in 1993, then collaborating with the director of Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts Lausanne for the exhibition *Private View 1980-2000: Collection Pierre Huber* in 2005 (Aupetitallot 2005) and selling them through Christie's Hong Kong in 2007. Another discernible example is the short-term investor, Michael Goedhuis, who gathered a private fund (from a few investors including Ray Debbane and Sacha Lanovic, the former was the president and the latter the co-founder and managing partner of the New York investment firm Invus Financial Advisors) and quickly amassed about 200 pieces in the name of the Estella Collection in 2003. Right after touring them in the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebaek, Denmark with the exhibition *China Onward: The Estella Collection Chinese Contemporary Art, 1966-2006* (Bowles 2007) and in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, Israel with the exhibition *Made in China-The Estella Collection* curated by Suzanne Landau in 2008, Goedhuis sold the entire collection to the art dealer William Acquavella in New York, who then immediately resold them in two groups through Sotheby's Hong Kong (for USD 18,000,000) and New York (Barboza 2008). Saatchi was a bit late to join this game of CCA. In 2008, the new space of Saatchi Gallery in Chelsea London held a group show *The Revolution Continues.* In 2009, he sold an entire collection of 180 pieces at Sotheby's Hong Kong.

Return of investment for long-term foreign (in)direct investment

The Saatchi model of short-term art investment for rich ROI in Britain seemed to be rather artless: hoarding little known works of young artists from their studios or the primary market, exhibiting them in established public institutes and then selling them monopolistically in the secondary market. Yet it appeared to be artful to use it for long-term investment like Uli Sigg or Guy Ullens did in the art game of CCA across

the borders of China, as the requirement to be adaptable of China-specific socio-political conditions remained high.

Like Saatchi, Sigg frequented and bought directly from artists. But unlike in Britain, in China the ecosystem or infrastructure of the art industry had yet to develop at that time. Lacking convincing art authorities to judge or rank the *value* of CCA, Sigg devised the aforementioned art award CCAA in 1998, through which he began to promote CCA to the West. Due to such an endeavor, the market prices of CCA increased drastically, as seen in the case of Ai Weiwei's *Sunflower Seeds*. In 2010, a hundred kilos of porcelain seeds (out of 150 tons consisting of 100 million seeds) were sold for USD 56,000 at Sotheby's New York, while an identical seed was listed for CNY 1.2 (USD 0.17) online in Taobao (the Chinese version of Amazon). The exact amount of Sigg's ROI has remained unknown, because he refused to reveal the actual cost (Sigg 2016). But it has been known that the 47 pieces he sold to Hong Kong were valued at USD 22.9 million in 2012, while an ordinary meal in the city center of Beijing should cost only around CNY 30 to 50 cents (USD 0.046-0.077) in the late 1990s when he began to collect CCA. A similar story occured with Ullens.

If Sigg's investment was indirect, Ullen's served as a clear example of FDI. Other than setting up an art award to create an international network, Ullens built his own art authority through UCCA—a quasi-museum with customary soical functions such as research, exhibition and education (but not collection). Instead of touring his collection abroad to the West with known university museums and art curators or critics, Ullens attempted to make UCCA an established venue itself in China by having it headed with reputable directors and collaborating with luxury fashion and high-end brands. Although Ullens was unable to accomplish a wholesaling of his collection to a single buyer in China (as Sigg did to M+ in Hong Kong) due to the lack of close *guan-xi* with the Chinese authority, the ROI generated from selling both the space of UCCA and the collection of his foundation was speculated to be high.

International market and national heritage

One significant paradox in valorizing art is the intriguing correlation between the measurable (use) value for the market and the immeasurable (non-use) value for the spiritual or philosophical. To create, interpret and promote such a coorelation relies almost exclusively on the writings of art historians, critics or theoreticians. This has all begun with the modern concept of "fine art," resulting from the anonymous market that emerged in response to the growing middle class of industrialized society in Europe (Corbey, Layton, and Tanner 2008). Together with it came the establishment of national art institutes (such as the Royal Academy of Arts in London) and the art industry business chain (Figure 1). Following political democratization, royal collections (high art) became public property under the captainship of (nationalised) museums to demonstrate and disseminate a crafted collective memory and cultural identity. Through such a heritage process, the artwork of an individual artist that enters a permanent collection of museum is supposed to be remembered and admired by future generations. Thus is born the common wish of modern artists for their works to be collected by (national) museums—which through research, exhibition and education will guarantee the value (the said correlation) of them. And this explains why most

contemporary artists would sell their work for exceptionally low prices or even give it for free to dealers who promise them museum acquisition. Scandals often occur when dealers fail to deliver on their promises, or museums are found to be complicit with them through holding temporary exhibition. Pierre Huber had such a scandal (Taylor 2007). So did the Estella Collection (Barboza 2008). Sigg and Ullens encountered similar criticism. One of Ullens's auction sales was called "shameless" by Fei Dawei, as many artists had sold their works at extremely low prices when Ullens's foundation promised not to "sell its legacy" (Halperin 2017). Both Sigg and Ullens denied the intention to sell, at some point. The former openly said that he did not plan to sell (Ren 2012), and the latter that he came to China spend but not to make money (*Art Finance* 2011) and refused to tell the reason for the eventual sales. Though praised by financial investment agencies (Gerlis 2018), the short-term transaction of art investment is absolutely avoided by well-established museums—which insist on "not getting too close to the market" so as to guard their credibility. Involved in the scandal of Estella Collection, the director of the Danish museum Anders Kold said he seriously regretted that it turned out to be mere speculation and that there was dishonesty. Had he known that the collection should quickly be sold, he would have never organized the exhibition.

Conventionally, the journey of an artwork from an artist's studio to museum storage is long. It often needs to pass through public competition as in Europe or market selection as in the USA—where the taxation and legal system is designed to encourage capitalists to reward society. The result is that millionaire-collectors are used to donating collections to museums or to setting up foundations running museums themselves, such as the Guggenheim or the Getty. The development of the art economy in China, especially after 1989 and before 2013, fell into the gap between the two systems and yielded great opportunities for long-term as well as short-term FiDI. These have generated rich ROI, but have also contributed to propelling a market-oriented ecosystem of the art industry and the birth of new laws related to the art market. In 1996, the Auction Law of the People's Republic of China was issued (revised in 2004 and 2015), and in 1999 the law on donations for public welfare. Yet it was not until 2016 that the general legal environment began to improve for private entrepreneurship of arts and culture, as seen in the revision of the General Rules of the Civil Law, Charity Law, regulations of voluntary service, Non-state Education Promotion Law, Enterprise Income Tax Law, regulations on the registration and management of social organizations and especially the preferential tax policies for social organizations and the notice on issues of tax exempt eligibility of nonprofit organizations. Such a lag in establishing art laws may explain why those conflicts of interest or violations of code of conduct occured in the art world, as seen in the actions of Sigg and Ullens as well as in the subsequent Chinese museum boom. In 1996, the well-known German millionaire-collectors of Chinese art, Elena and Jurgen Ludwig, donated 117 prestigious modern artworks of Western masters to the National Art Museum of China. In 2010, the Colorado-based banker Kent and Vicki Logan donated their entire collection (one of the greatest of modern art and CCA in the USA) to the Denver Art Museum. It remains to be seen whether this would become a model for the Chinese nouveau-riche to handle their collections with or without their own museum establishments. But it is mostly certain that the chances have become thin for another Sigg or Ullens to come and play the art game of CCA accroding to the

Saatchi model and return their holdings to China with exponential ROI through a donation-sale or auction-sale to the locals in the coming years.

Conclusion

The findings of the two case studies on Uli Sigg and Guy Ullens and the extensive survey of the CCA market performance presented in this study have demonstrated how the long-term and short-term FiDI played the art game of CCA according to the Saatchi model between 1989 and 2013. Because of understanding deeply the local socio-political situation as foreign investors and businessmen inside China, Sigg and Ullens were able to succeed in their transnational art enterprises, with rich ROI in the end.

This study represents one of the first attempts to examine the connection between FiDI and China's art economy. FiDI has been identified as playing a crucial role in promoting the contemporary art of non-Western cultures by networking it to global (international or Western) art institutes and market. It has helped to build or complete the local art industry ecosystems of developing countries by transferring expert knowledge or engaging in actual construction. Yet it also creates a risk of manipulating or exploiting the development of non-Western arts by favoring a specific theme or style of art production and overpricing certain artworks in pursuit of high ROI. This occurs through a loosely regulated market mechanism which lacks substance in terms of art philosophy and theory.

Although the lack of direct information from the art business may present a limitation for research, the discovery of the art game played by the FiDI of CCA according to the Saatchi model should be applied to other emerging art economies of non-Western cultures as well, for example, in Southeast Asia or the Middle East. Nevertheless, one important reason for the success of Sigg, Ullens and the like is the rise of China per se—from an agrarian society to the world's factory and a global powerhouse within around three decades—which makes the rich ROI of FiDI possible. In other words, the experience of Sigg or Ullens might not be easily reproduced with other developing countries. As a longstanding culture and a rising power, China's contemporary art seems to be able to continue growing with reorientations provided by local hands, as manifested in the museum boom after the long-term and short-term FiDI cashed out from the market. What about other countries? This is a challenging question to be examined by future studies.

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II

UNDERSTANDING THE RANKING OF CHINESE CONTEMPORARY ART

by

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(a research-opinion working paper)

Understanding the Ranking of Chinese Contemporary Art*

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*The original title of the working paper written in English and presented in the conference is ‘*Ranking Contemporary Art: A Cartesian Coordinate System and the ‘Other’ Dimension’*, and the published version of it included in the conference proceedings is in simplified Chinese, the official language of the host country, China. See the Conference Proceedings of CIHA 34th World Congress of Art History (第34届世界艺术史大会论文集), Vol. 1, Session 2. The Rank of Art (第一册，第二分会，标准与品评), pp. 173-179.*

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1. Introduction

Many academic and journalistic publications have appeared in recent years that attempt to examine the relationship between economics and the arts and culture.[1] From the art studio of Rembrandt (1606–1669)[2] to the entrepreneurship of Damien Hirst (1965–),[3] the non-artistic factors that have influenced the current version of art history in the West have been exposed. Throughout history, from the perspective of social and cultural anthropology, it appears that the target groups of art have shifted from religion and monarchy to the middle class of an industrial society, the nation-state and the common public. Although such a development is not linear and the target groups often overlap with one another, it can be seen that the use and purpose of (fine) art has shifted along with changing social paradigms provided by different system of political economy.

In the contemporary art world, the previously inexplicit power relations behind the canvas, the conceptual installation or the new media of an artwork are difficult to conceal. Especially in the digital age, the secretive plans and agendas of art dealers and agents can be easily traced and quickly exposed in the media. The many innovations in computer programming and applications help make the tangible and intangible values of art quantifiable.[4] One of the best demonstrations of how the value of contemporary art can be quantified is the emerging ‘chart culture’—the phenomenon of ranking or grading artworks, artists and artist-brands. Due to the globalised market economics of contemporary art, this cultural phenomenon occurs in China as well. Despite increasing scholarly interest in the emerging Chinese contemporary art market,[5] this phenomenon

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[1] Heilbrun, *The Economics of Art and Culture*.
[2] Alpers, *Rembrandt’s Enterprise: The Studio and the Market*.
[3] Thompson, *The 12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art*.
[4] Adam, *Bog Bucks: The Explosion of the Art Market in the 21st Century*.
[5] Joy and Sherry Jr, “Framing Considerations in the Prc: Creating Value in the Contemporary Chinese Art Market”; Zheng, *Unscrolled: Reframing Tradition in Chinese Contemporary Art*.

of ranking and listing remains underexplored. This research-opinion paper represents a preliminary attempt to bridge this knowledge gap. In addition to examining the nature, purpose and possible effect of the current ranking lists of Chinese contemporary art, it focuses on the methodology of such listings and offers suggestions for improvement. The discussion is structured as follows: (1) the epistemology of Chinese contemporary art ranking; (2) an analysis of the current chart-like like rankings of Chinese contemporary art; and (3) a proposal for a new ranking mechanism with an evaluation of possibility and feasibility—a three-dimensional ranking system with three coordinates that indicate the 'market value', 'artistic value' and 'social value' of a Chinese contemporary artwork or artist or artist-brand.

To better illustrate this model of ranking the 'use' and 'non-use' values[6] of Chinese contemporary art, a case study of a major figure in Chinese contemporary art, Zeng Fanzhi (1964–), is included. The reason for taking this artist-brand as an example is that he was the first Chinese contemporary artist to be compared to Western ones in terms of breaking the auction sale records for contemporary art in the 2000s—selling one of his pieces for HKD 70 million (USD 9 million) at Christie's Hong Kong in May 2008.[7] As a research-opinion paper, the main objective is to provoke further discussion about the current 'chart culture' of Chinese contemporary art. By reflecting on some of the irregular business practices in the Chinese contemporary art industry, which has been built within a short period of time following the model provided by the West in the Anglo-American style, the paper illuminates the predicament of Chinese contemporary art when it has become so dominated by the market. One solution is making art education widely available to the common public in addition to building a public support system for Chinese contemporary artists.

2. Nature, Criteria and Mechanism of Art Ranking

According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, the word *rank* as a noun first appeared in the 14th century. In Old French it meant 'row' and 'line' and in Proto-Germanic 'circle' and 'ring'. In the early 15th century, the meaning of the word expanded to indicate 'a social division, class or persons'; and since the 16th century 'a relative position'. As a verb, it then began to signify 'to arrange in lines, put into order, classify'. In this light, to rank art theoretically is to 'hierarchise' a relative position, value, worth, complexity, power, importance, authority and level of art—be it an artwork or artist. Within a specific ranking system of art, any two artworks or artists should be comparable and able to be placed in some sort of order. The assumption, of course, is that to rank we have to 'know' the item that is to be ranked. Ranking consists of identifying, categorising, and then putting things into order. It is a conceptual activity that involves successive cognitive and epistemic work, aspects that are fundamental to our current knowledge system, which is based on the scientific principles derived from the natural science and philosophy of the Enlightenment.[8] Therefore, the epistemological question of 'What is art?' should be the starting point for any ranking of Chinese contemporary art, or of art in general.

The core question for any ranking of Chinese contemporary art should be 'What is Chinese contemporary art?' But apparently this is not the case. As one of the most challenging questions for such lists, it is left out of the discussion. This is very possibly the root cause for the unclear 'artistic value' implied by such lists. Without sufficient studies on the epistemology of Chinese contemporary art, it will be problematic to take the current ranking lists as a guide to learning

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[6] Victor and Ginsburgh, *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*.
[7] Thompson, *The Supermodel and the Brillo Box: Back Stories and Peculiar Economics from the World of Contemporary Art*.
[8] Chai, *Espistemology (認識論)*.

about Chinese contemporary art, especially in terms of the cultural norms and value it represents. Theoretically speaking, the market value of art should be closely related to its artistic value. Art, however, is made by people. Its meaning-making (essential to the definition of artistic value) is not fixed but frequently in flux and changes depending on the time, place and people. Very little of it concerns the scientific principles as seen in the natural sciences and philosophy.

In this light, the ranking system of art should also vary according to different times, places and cultures. This, however, is not the case for contemporary art, or for other arts in general—consider the theoretical attempts in recent years to decolonise art history. To illustrate the phenomenon of ranking, it suffices to ask basic questions when reading the rankings of Chinese contemporary art: What is ranked? How? When and where? Who is doing the ranking, and for whom is it done? This critical thinking will then make explicit the overt market dominance and the entertainment-business-like marketing purposes of current Chinese contemporary art ranking lists.

3. The Changing Criteria of Valuing Art

To further explore the topic of ranking systems, we can start with a preliminary understanding of the sociopolitical background of ranking in the world of Chinese contemporary art. As mentioned, different social traditions and paradigms—be they theocratic, autocratic or democratic—should have different criteria for the valuing of art. Before modern times and the advent of the consumer society (when money began to serve as a universal signifier of value), art was ranked and evaluated in diverse ways, not simply in financial terms. These include, for example, Plato's discussions on rhetoric and poetry, the principles of art proposed by the forefather of Chinese art theory Xie He (around 550 AD), the art aesthetics of Song literati in medieval China (960–1276 AD), patronage in Italy during the Renaissance, the principle painter in ordinary of the king or queen of England in the 16th century, and the paintings arranged and displayed in the cabinets of curiosities in the 17th century. All these represented specific criteria for the ranking of art under specific sociopolitical conditions.

This historical view provides an explanation for the synchroneity of ranking contemporary art in China and the West. It shows, in particular, how Chinese contemporary art as a genre is a result of the social reforms made in the country since 1978—a starting point for the country's next phase of radical modernisation centred on so-called Occidentalism.[9] In fact, modernisation in concept and practice has been a quasi-synonym of 'Westernisation' in the Chinese context since the late 19th century and especially after the May Fourth Movement, an anti-imperialist cultural and political social movement which took place in 1919, where some of the student leaders like Geng Jizhi (1899–1947) had strived for a policy of complete Westernisation—meaning to remove traditional culture and value system and replace them with the Western ones. In this light, the emergence of Chinese contemporary art in the late 20th century could be regarded as a far-reaching result of such a social, cultural and intellectual movement of modernisation. Eventually, what is represented by the ranking lists of Chinese contemporary art is, in actuality, the cultural tradition and value system of the Western art world, which are completely different from the Chinese ones. As a consequence, a meaningful discussion of Chinese contemporary art ranking, at least part of it, should involve intercultural and comparative studies in the field of arts and culture. Entering the 21st century, with China rise as a global powerhouse, the time seems ripe to rethink not only the market performance of Chinese contemporary art but also its inner value standard as

[9] Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*.

well as its social impacts on, for example, the art students of the formal as well as the informal education systems, and the general public.

4. A Critical Analysis of Current Ranking Lists

Following the thriving development of the globalised Chinese contemporary art market since the mid-1990s, many ranking lists of Chinese contemporary art emerged in the 2010s. From a multidisciplinary point of view, it is justifiable to consider that these rankings of fine art (or high art) are not too different from those charts in the field of popular culture for pop music or the film industry. A closer look at the business side of contemporary art shows that the term *contemporary art* actually refers to a specific industry (rather than a genre of art) in the same way as terms such as *innovation industry*, *banking industry* and *service industry* do. From an analytic point of view, this specific industry contains a variety of actor-agents that form the ecosystem and infrastructure of the art economy. These include art schools, artist studios, commercial galleries, auction houses, art fairs, art funds and art banks, the art media and publications, museums and art centres, journalists, critics, independent and institutional curators, agents and dealers, and investors and collectors (Figure 1). When viewing such an art system, it is not difficult to imagine that any ranking list originating from it would be market oriented, with prominent capitalist features and a political economy in the Anglo-American style.[10] The cultural phenomenon of art succumbing to the market has been severely criticised by critics and philosophers of art in continental Europe, and it is considered to have negative impacts on the general development of art. However, alternatives do exist, such as in the welfare society of Nordic countries, where abundant government subsidies, public or private grants, and funding are established for contemporary art professionals, in addition to a comparatively fair social security and tax system. In this kind of society, market concerns seldom occupy the minds of contemporary art professionals and the uses of their art are mainly for the collective wellbeing of the people,[11] as seen in the projects of urban planning, lifetime education, citizen participation and the creation of a multicultural society. The making of contemporary art is also encouraged to participate in the innovation and experience economy in designing society's future.

However, in post-socialist China, things are different. Instead of public support and fair social security and taxation, we see the replication of a contemporary art system in the Anglo-American style, a phenomenon that is visible in the many ranking lists of Chinese contemporary art. The most known of these lists are those made by foreign companies. These include ArtReview's Power 100, Forbes, Forbes China, and Artsy's annual artist ranking. Other lists are made locally: the Hurun China Art List, the AMI Annual ranking of Chinese Art, the annual ranking of Chinese authors' fortunes, and so on. A brief survey of these rankings reveals certain critical facts: (1) all of the producers of these rankings are media companies; (2) all of the co-producers are financial service agencies; (3) the committee members assigned to carry out the rankings are either unmentioned or said to be deliberately kept anonymous; (4) the procedures of how the rankings are determined remain inexplicit; and (5) most of those figures included in the rankings come from a narrowly defined pool of the Chinese contemporary art industry.

This survey finds out that the making of Chinese contemporary art rankings is a marketing strategy, just like those that are often seen in the market of popular culture, where annual awards, listings of blockbuster films, and pop music charts are created by entertainment companies in direct or indirect collaboration with production houses, media enterprises, publicists

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[10] Robertson, *Understanding International Art Market and Management*.

[11] Triisberg, Krikortz, and Hendriksson, *Art Workers: Material Conditions and Labour Struggles in Contemporary Art Practices*.

and advertising agencies, and especially investment and financial service companies. However, there is one significant difference: the role played by the audience. The ranking of Chinese contemporary art has little to do with its audiences, unlike in the entertainment industry, where the main revenue comes from the audience as the consumer of cultural products. These consumers often get to vote or contribute to rankings through, for example, sales or the box office. The absence of the audience in the making of Chinese contemporary art rankings seems to suggest as well that this specific art genre belongs to the so-called high art or high culture, a privilege of the bourgeoise in the pre-Modern times. If this is the case, why make such a ranking list in the press and media? Apparently, it is for the art buyers, investors and collectors. A private list circulating among a small circle of contemporary art buyers is less appealing than a public one followed by a large audience. To be included on such a list is to increase market confidence. With such a goal in mind, promoters of an artist-brand[12] (namely those commercial galleries or art dealers and agents) seek to collaborate with academics, critics and curators of public cultural institutions. As a result, scandals often occur when such collaboration is exposed.[13]

Some may argue that the comparison between the rankings of Chinese contemporary art and the ones for pop music and blockbuster movies is not justifiable, as the tastes and the audiences of each differ. However, considering the aspect of material, technique or style, the line between the so-called high art (contemporary art) and popular art (pop music or movies) is disappearing and, in the contemporary era, becomes rather thin indeed. This thinning process is related to the industrialisation and commercialisation of modern society, as seen in the West since the start of the modern epoch. This long-term historical development provides an epistemological foundation for the common knowledge of art and art history that is shared by the common public through education, be it with a formal system of schools or an informal one of museums and art centres. It is often seen in the Anglo-American as well as some continental European systems of political economy that those who are at the top of the wealth pyramid are also the ones who have the biggest power in the art world.[14] These wealthy individuals frequently establish collections, foundations and museums and open them to the public with the intention of receiving favourable tax treatment. This is just beginning to happen in China,[15] as government influence (something seen in Chinese propaganda art before the 1980s) gives way to a form of state-sponsored capitalism. In this light, what the rich and the powerful buy (as art) becomes critical, since their taste influences the art public, including makers and audiences.

Because the art education offered by museums is not yet widely accessible, however, it is understandable why most avant-garde Chinese contemporary art exhibitions, such as those held in the 798 Contemporary Art District in Beijing, are incomprehensible to the general Chinese public. To that public, those artworks are merely exotic or 'Western'. After some shopping for a couple of design products or a souvenir of the exhibited artworks[16] and taking a few photos in a place like 798, these tourists simply return home to enjoy their daily meals of typical Chinese cuisine,[17] read the poetry of Li Bai (701–762) or Su Dongpo (1037–1101) and indulge in classical Chinese painting, calligraphy and antiques. Currently, it is evident that the gap between Chinese contemporary art and Chinese traditional or classic art in terms of the public's acceptance and

[12] Zorloni, *The Economics of Contemporary Art: Markets, Strategies and Stardom*.
[13] Bowles, *China Onward: The Estella Collection Chinese Contemporary Art, 1966-2006*.
[14] O'Hagan, *The State and the Arts; An Analysis of Key Economic Policy Issues in Europe and the United States*.
[15] Pei et al., "The Museum Boom in China - Museumification of China."
[16] For example, in the boutique of UCCA, the most known Chinese contemporary art gallery in 798 established by Guy Ullens in 2006.
[17] Chen et al., "A Bite of China."

acknowledgement is wide. Is this gap going to be bridged in the near future? After all, it is not without precedent in Chinese history that the once-upon-a-time foreign or exotic cultural elements merge with local ones and became traditional, such as the taste for grape wine, gilded Buddhist statues or enamel furnace and glass. The essential criteria for such a localisation to happen is often not in the material, form or technique of the artwork but the spiritual or philosophical interpretation of it. What the signifier of Chinese contemporary art signifies may well become identical with Chinese classic art,[18] should enough theoretical work be done. In this light, the use of 'Chinese elements' in the making of Chinese contemporary art, which is encouraged by the market, may be regarded as favourable for this direction of development. To move forward, it will involve more negotiations between the Western and Chinese cultural systems—a process that began more than a century ago and is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

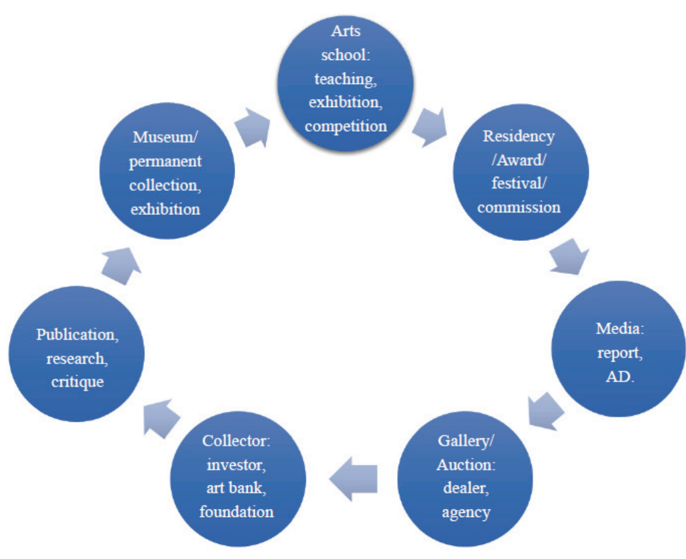

Figure. The Value-Added Chain of Contemporary Art Actor-Agents

5. Towards a Cartesian Coordinate System with a Third Dimension

Considering the current development of museum praxis in China, perhaps a Chinese contemporary art ranking system made by the private sector is needed. But is it possible to build a more reflective and inclusive system other than the currently market-oriented ones? The answer should be positive, given the vigorous development of art collecting and the related museum boom around the country. It is only within the last fifteen years that the entire infrastructure and ecosystem of the Chinese contemporary art economy has been built, modelled on the Western prototype and its centuries-long history. At such a hasty pace, it is almost inevitable to see chaos due to an unprepared legal environment, the lack of a code of conduct, and the actor-agents' insufficient knowledge of professional ethics. Especially in the longstanding tradition of Confucianism, art was either a privilege for the elite class of literati or statesmen in pursuit of spiritual growth or a craft for the lower social class to make a living. Even in modern days, art education is often marginalised or neglected in the formal education system, which continues to feature the thousand-year-old tradition of imperial examination. Under such circumstances, it is

[18] The difference of the two at the moment are shown for example by the Google algorithm of image search.

reasonable to view a celebrated Chinese contemporary art ranking list in the media as a useful part of some sort of public art education, as long as the ranking or rating is diversified enough and has more than a marketing purpose. As to how to make a diversified ranking list, one must reconsider the core questions mentioned previously: 'Whose ranking list?', 'How is it made?', 'Why make it?', 'For whom?' and 'When and where it is made?' A simple suggestion is to make a three-dimensional ranking system with each dimension representing a specifically defined value of art—the *market value*, *artistic value* and the *social value* (Fig 2).[19]

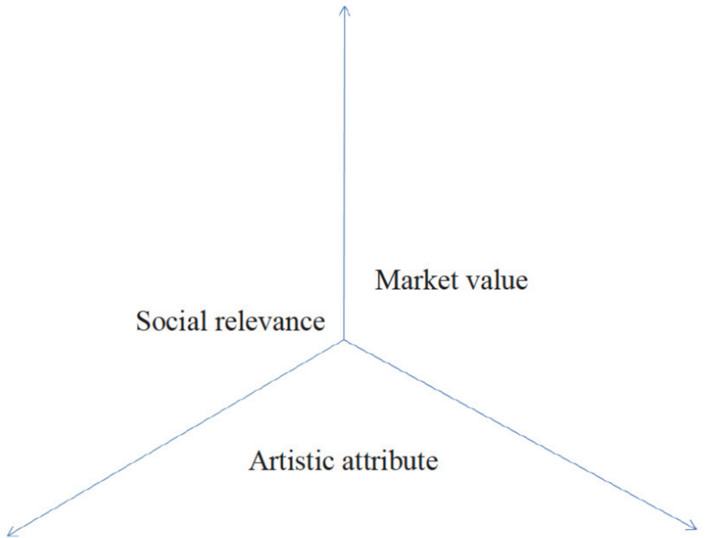

Figure 1. A Three-Dimensional Value System of Chinese Contemporary Art

- Market Value

The existing ranking lists of Chinese contemporary art are, as noted, exclusively market oriented. The benefits of such an orientation for dealers and agents is clear: they are easier to manipulate. For example, the hammer price of auction sales can be faked by the so-called 'chandelier bid' (phantom bid) and the items can be given a 'third-party guarantee' (meaning that the item is guaranteed to be sold at a certain price if it is burned at the auction). A ranking list based on these sales is therefore very questionable in terms of its reliability and credibility. Especially in the Chinese contemporary art world it is often seen that an artwork from an artist studio is firstly sold at the secondary market of an auction house instead of on the primary market of commercial gallery. This is related to an irregular way of how an artwork or artist can increase in market value—use the faked hammer prices in the secondary market to set the average market price in the primary market of galleries. From a structuralist point of view, the contemporary artist resembles a brand in the market of luxury products. A good brand is made by a trustworthy company, just like a promising young art graduate from a reputed art school. From an emerging artist to an established artist, he or she needs to go through a series of polishing events: art awards, art residency, museum exhibition, art festivals, biennales, art fairs. The ultimate goal is to enter the permanent collection of a public museum. This journey is also a value added process for an artist's brand. It is not so different from, for example, what happens to a stone in the diamond industry—from mining to cutting, polishing and becoming high-end jewellery for the world to admire (Fig 3). Art, however, as a conceptual entity rather than as a stone that shines on its own,

[19] Frey, *Arts and Economics Analysis and Cultural Policy*; Victor and Ginsburgh, *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*; Towse, *Advanced Introduction to Cultural Economics*.

relies on the art texts that discuss it, praise it and promote it for its value. To polish an artist-brand is much to write about it on the occasions of gallery shows, in museum exhibition catalogues, and journalist reports known as 'dealer critiques'. The artistic value of a specific artist-brand is largely determined by these texts.

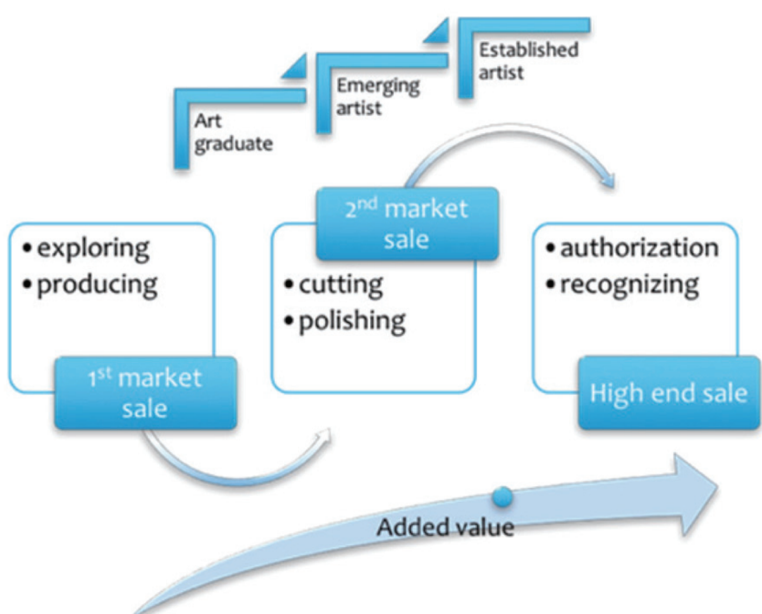

Figure 2 The Value-Adding Process of the Contemporary Art Industry

- Artistic Value

However, are the art texts reliable in knowing the artistic value of an artist-brand? Especially when most of them are written by request or commissioned. As different cultural systems have their own aesthetic traditions and art features, there should be different criteria according to which the artistic value of an artist-brand is given, identified and interpreted. However, this does not seem to be the case for Chinese contemporary art. Anthropologists consider art-making a particular feature of the entire human species based on the theory of evolution, and art is an essential topic for most philosophers, cultural critics and theoreticians around the world. Contemporary art, as well as modern art, however, appear to have only one set of norms and value—the Western one. Despite this narrow basis, artistic quality is actually hard to measure or quantify. As an abstract and intangible attribute of art, 'quality' depends very much on the verbal or linguistic medium to be communicated. Digital technology is making everything quantifiable, so one modest way to measure artistic value could be simply to rank the art texts according to, for example, the standards of academic publishing. Especially in the context of Chinese contemporary art, the term 'artistic' is often replaced with 'academic'[20] when talking about how important a piece of art is. Theoretically speaking, academic writings could play an important role in the value-added chain of the contemporary art industry, as in the West most of the art actor-agents are independent from one another, and the art world has its own business model and code of ethics. Any statistic generated from such an art ecosystem should have a certain trustworthiness.

- Social Value

[20] In Chinese as '學術性'.

To communicate the artistic value of a piece of art is also a way to ascertain its social impact, especially in the case of market-dominated Chinese contemporary art. This would link the discussion to the third value definition of the proposed three-dimensional ranking system: a work's 'social value' or 'social relevance'. Same as the artistic value, social value is difficult to measure. In a similar approach to appropriating the standards of academic publishing, it is possible to use 'visitor studies'—an ethnographic research method commonly used in social sciences and humanities, including the cultural studies or the museum and heritage studies. Onsite and online questionnaires, interviews and participatory observations at the exhibition of Chinese contemporary art could be used to gather direct data and information for further analysis and quantification into meaningful statistics. The content generated by, for example, social media in online environments can be useful for the examination of feedback and reactions by art audiences. In addition to discourse analysis, the number of likes, followers, reposts or mentions in social media can serve as a direct indicator of how popular artworks and artists or artist-brands are to their online audiences.

To demonstrate how the three-dimensional ranking system of Chinese contemporary art should work methodologically, a simple case study can carried out on one of the top-tier Chinese contemporary art stars, Zeng Fanzhi, who has appeared on the Hurun China Art List of the most successful Chinese artists alive today for the past ten years in a row. As 'the most expensive Chinese contemporary artist', the market value of this artist-brand is confirmed by the record-setting auction sales at Sotheby's and Christie's. Nevertheless, the artistic and academic value of it remains questionable. Despite the large amount of art texts (dealer critiques) circulating in the Chinese context, there are few academic papers that discuss this artist-brand. For example, in JSTOR, a digital library of academic journals, there are only five papers talking about it (while there are 623 papers on Jeff Koons). Except for the promotional texts included in the exhibition catalogues that are published informally by commercial galleries, most of the commentaries in the art press appear to be negative. As to the social value, a brief survey of the most popular internet forums and social media in China shows that this artist-brand has little social relevance: the fans group in Douban has only twenty-five members, in Zhihu twenty-five and in Baidu twenty-six; and in Arton, one of the most popular online art portals in China, there are only twenty-seven listings found under the name of this artist-brand. These numbers are shockingly low for someone who is known as the most expensive Chinese contemporary artist. For comparison, the total number of likes from just the top five Facebook fans pages of Jeff Koons stands at over 30,000.

6. Conclusion

This small case study suggests that in the Chinese contemporary art world the market value of an artist-brand is far more elevated than the artistic and social ones. This might be a result of the market-oriented development of Chinese contemporary art since its debut in the post-conflict era, where the globalised neoliberal market economy is much celebrated. In any case, this phenomenon is abnormal and considered negative for the long-term development of Chinese contemporary art. If the fault is not to be found in the specific artist-brand per se, it is probably in the making of it in the business chain of the Chinese contemporary art industry. One quick way to find out is to verify how the actor-agents are linked in the Chinese contemporary art industry. As mentioned above, in the West, these art actor-agents are more than often found to be independent from one another, with their own development history, business model, professional ethics and social responsibilities (Fig 4). The connection or collaboration between them is not and should not be based on the immediate prospect of profit, at least not directly. In the West, it is seldom to see, like in China, an art professor at a reputed art school simultaneously owning and

running a successful commercial art gallery; a gallerist (agent or dealer) as a publisher of an influential art magazine that sells advertisements and pays art professors or critics to write; or the curator or director of an established national art museum being also a collector of the works of the artist-brands included in the permanent collection of the museum he heads. These cases indicate not only a crisis of ethics in the Chinese contemporary art world, but also a social and cultural challenge in general in post-Mao China. At a time when the legal environment still needs improvement to support the sustainable development of the contemporary art economy, it is almost inevitable to see such chaos. All of these changes have occurred too fast, with the construction of the entire ecosystem and infrastructure being built from scratch within a dozen or so years. By all appearances, China would seem to have a functional art industry and a rising art economy. The Chinese contemporary art world can associate itself with the ones in New York, London and Paris. This appearance, however, may remain only surface deep, should no further work be carried out in terms of, for example, the legal environment, the public support system for artists and the art education of the common public.

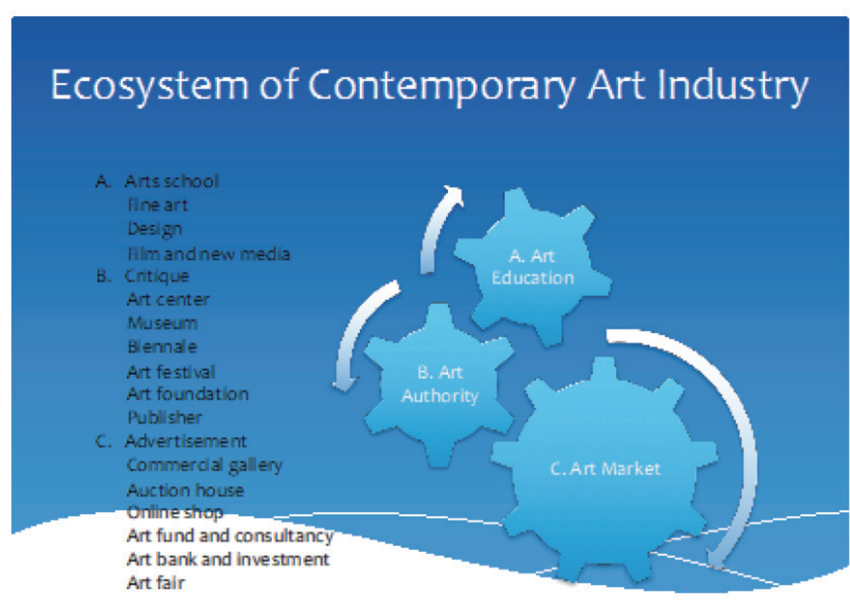

Figure 3 The Ecosystem and Infrastructure for (Chinese) Contemporary Art Economy

With its focus on the ranking and rating of Chinese contemporary art, this research-opinion paper highlights the importance of art education for the general public. Sufficient art education can serve as a preliminary tool to prevent Chinese contemporary art from being completely hijacked by the market. It is disappointing to see art become a luxury product in the contemporary era and serve only the rich and powerful. Although art as an industry in a consumer society can create job opportunities and generate GDP, it is regrettable if the essential questions of what art is, why it is made and who it serves are forgotten. It is in pursuit of answers to these very questions that many art movements and art theories have emerged in modern times. It is unfortunate to see that as art research emerges in countries such as Canada or Switzerland, most of the Chinese contemporary artists are still preoccupied by the market, as it is perhaps the only chance for them to continue making art. When an art form does not embrace the public, it is natural that it is not appreciated by the public.

To bridge the gap, a public support system for Chinese contemporary artists is crucial. Instead of looking to the Anglo-American style of the contemporary art economy, the art system of the welfare society in the Nordic countries could provide an alternative model for the possible development of Chinese contemporary art. In such a society, art is not so much about 'How much?' but rather 'What, how and why?'—the core questions of artistic research. In addition, art education is pervasive and widely available through both the formal and informal education systems. Such a cultural policy is advantageous for the increasing of human capital, a solution suggested by the economist Putman for the 'crisis of the American Dream'. As mentioned, it can also be a solution to bridge the gap between Chinese contemporary art and the general public in China. Perhaps the gap between Chinese contemporary art (Western, avant-garde and advanced art), the general public and Chinese traditional and classic art can be finally mended once a more diversified, inclusive and transparent ranking system of Chinese contemporary art is developed, when it is common to see an art critic, historian or audience make their own ranking lists freely and with confidence.

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III

TURNING RIGHT/TURNING LEFT? A NEOCLASSICAL SOCIOECONOMIC QUERY OF THE ARTS SIGNALED BY MUSEUM AND BRANDING IN FINLAND

by

Shuchen Wang, 2016

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Turning Right / Turning Left?
A Neoclassical Socioeconomic Query of the Arts Signaled by Museum and Branding in Finland

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ABSTRACT: Guggenheim Helsinki Plan indicated a wishful turn of the arts and culture in Finland from the socio-democratic tradition of a welfare society towards a further neoliberalism. Following the Finnish historical timeline and from a museological viewpoint, this paper reviews how national identify was built through the arts, which later integrated into formal and informal education to enhance human capital. This instrumental view now promotes the idea of useful art to fuel innovation economy of advanced technology. Considering embarking the intricate platform of arts, economics, and finance through Guggenheim, rethinking contemporary art market mechanism may prove to be beneficial.

KEYWORD: Museology, Art Hisotry, Arts Management, Cultural Identiy, Branding, Cultural Economy, Art Education, Cultural Policy, Neoliberalism, Art Market

INTRODUCTION

Art is highly appreciated by all human societies. Bio-anthropologist even considers it an important feature of our humanity, and it is a must-have subject to almost all philosophers. However this paper does not discuss arts from these perspectives but within a historical and sociological context, in terms of Finland, a one hundred years old country, the most American country in Europe, so they said. With Guggenheim Helsinki Plan as prelude, this study is about the role of arts played for, by, and in this country. National history, cultural heritage, art education, and cultural policy are various elements that this paper composes its discourse. Through literature review and analyzing digital archives of relevant arts organizations, it becomes clear that coined with a socio-democratic political tradition and mix economy system since the sixtieth art has played an instrumental role in this Finnish tradition: from building nation-state and cultural identity to enhancing "human capital" in formal and informal education, from generating creative economy and cultural industry to fueling up innovation economy of advanced digital technology.

It is difficult to judge this tended socioeconomic turn towards further neoliberalism signaled by Guggenheim Helsinki Plan. Looking into the past and reviewing those steps that led us to where we are today, is perhaps a good method to find reference. In order to have an overall picture about the

arts and cultural development of this country since the time when its independence was conceived, the first part is to reconstruct the national history with the viewpoint that its national identity was built though the arts. It was under an urge of romantic nationalism that material and immaterial cultural heritage was gathered and institutionalized around the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to forge a cultural identity supporting political request of independency. The lack of the material cultural heritage made the immaterial one imperative, notably documentation of back-then still live oral tradition. Although the absence of monarchy had made this country rather fair and equal in social structure, in museological development this also resulted in weak high art and high culture, that often became the basis of modern museum institution. Instead of cabinet of curiosity or royal art collection, existed here only artworks created and owned by various arts societies and their founding members, in music, drawing, and writing. Under this specific historical light, the value of art (collection) was invented with passionate nationalism since the vey beginning and that later was integrated and performed in the country's formal and informal education system. Now after another turn of the century, arts start to be seen as with added value along free-market capitalist mechanism, as artistic creativity is expected to fuse into technological innovation. "Useful art" is then being promoted to boost innovation technology economics. If Robin Hood project represents a romantic attempt to conciliate arts and finance by a local art community, Guggenheim Helsinki Plan represents then the governmental intention to install Finland into international contemporary art landscape meanwhile seeking tangible return of investment.

GUGGENHEIM CHALLENGES HELSINKI

On the north-eastern shore of the Baltic Sea a "twenty-first century art museum" (Durry et al. ed. 2011, 4) was envisioned right after the first decade of the new millennium by a few local politicians, as often the case, and a global-scaled international art enterprise—the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation (SRGF), which sought to create another branch following its success stories outside the USA in Venice, Bilbao, Berlin (1997-2013), and Abu-Dhabi (SRGF 2015) as well as some failed ones, often accompanied with certain financial or political scandals, in countries like Austria (Fowler 1990), Brazil (Kaufman and Verlichak 2002), Mexico (Artdaily 2005), Taiwan (Pollard 2003), China (Reuters 2007), and Lithuania (Etherington 2008). To Helsinki, the first proposal was presented in 2011 and rejected by the city council in 2012; and in 2013 a revised version was submitted again with certain modifications: stand alone from the city art museum, lower annual operation cost, higher revenue prospection, focus on the theme of Nordic architecture and design, build a permanent art collection, and solicit licensing fee from private sponsors instead of public funding (Moser et al. ed. 2013). In 2014 the city council agreed to reserve a museum site in its renewal urban plan around the

Southern Harbour and an international architecture competition was open and accomplished around mid-2015. Although again being under consideration by the city council, debates over the Plan between opponents and proponents are still scorching.

With the common public staying mostly neutral, arguments over this Guggenheim Helsinki Plan are mainly from the arts sector and the political circle. The former includes museum director and curator, minister of culture, art critic, and artist with main concern about SRGF's projected visitor number, optimistic impact on tourism, and most important of all, their already thinned government subsidies being diluted even more (Siitari 2012). The latter contains mainly city mayor, prime minister, minister of economic affairs, minister of defence, and private gallerist with expectation on Finland's international media exposure rate, economic opportunity, strengthening Helsinki's cultural status, and bridging local artist unto international venue through SRGF (Sullström 2012).

To buy or not to buy the Guggenheim brand? Answer theoretically may depend on how this deal would influence Finland's creative economy, cultural industry, global contemporary art landscape, local artist and art institute. Apart from those opmistic statistic numbers given by an international business management and consulting agency, it is perhaps beneficial if the search of possible answer and the reasoning would go further than superficial calculation and dive into historical background, value of the arts in Finnish national identity, culture, and education along this country's centenary history. Following the development of Finnish cultural policy history, Guggenheim Helsinki Plan might be a significant sign indicating a socioeconomic turn from a welfare society with socio-democratic tradition to joining the free-market spirited neoliberal capitalist economic system. It is then understandable under this light that why current Finnish political liberals are against the Plan and conservatives are for it (Wainwright 2014).

LOOKING BACK: INDEPENDENCE, NATIONALISM, AND THE ARTS

The almost *faute de mieux* independence according to Jakobsson (Volner 2015, Lavery 2006, 92) from the tsar in 1917 has made the national history of Finland peculiar from its neighboring countries but close to those ones independent from the fall of Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires at the end of the First World War. The long history from 1157 to 1809 under the Swedish Crown being a part of the Kingdom of Sweden had established a rather stable social structure composed mainly by four social classes: the nobility, clergy, urban burghers, and peasantry. During this Swedish era, Finland evolved identically with other parts of the Kingdom, in religion, political institution, culture, and economy, except language—an oral language without written form spoken only by the Finns with linguistic link to Uralic rather than Norse. Before the early modern time whereas nation emerged as a conceptual entity that people were primarily loyal to, Finland had existed

more in a geographical sense rather than ethnic or cultural. Being remote from the power center like Roman Catholic Church or Swedish court, the majority of local population belonged to the lowest social class, peasantry (higher classes were mostly composed by Swedish immigrants). This ninety-five per cent local habitants, though presented in the parliament and could own their lands and were free to move (William 1974), had to bear ninety per cent of tax coming from the farmlands where they were regulated to live in. The way of living as small independent peasants over hundreds of years might have left traits in certain collective cultural characteristics such as solitude, realism, and modesty (Lewis 2005). It morever had prevented wealthy cities to emerge as labored products and recourses were gathered and removed away from Finland and the sparsely distrubited farmer residences made it didfficult to form or organize any opinion center against the empirial domination from Stockholm (Lavery 2006, 34).

Located in the transit of Eurasia, this land of Finns was constantly devastated by warfare between Swedish Crown and Novgorod along the eighteenth century. However, it was also because of this power struggle from both sides that made space for the seeds of a Finnish nation-state to grow. Vis-à-vis Russian invasion Finland was treated more and more as a separate place by Stockholm for economic and military needs. Another contributing factor was the influence of some liberal economists from continental Europe to promote free trade that inspired certain social reforms to liberate regulations and special privileges (Lavery 2006, 44). Thus in 1809 when Sweden signed the treaty with the Russian Empire, Finland earned its autonomy as a grand duchy. Since then, tax was allowed to be kept in this land and the Russian Empire facilitated the advance of Finland's political organization, nationhood, economy, and civil society, until the turn of the twentieth century.

Under the turmoil sociopolitical circumstance during the eighteenth century, some Finns started to seek alternative political alignment in exchange for peace. In 1788 some officers out of the feeling that Sweden regarded Finland simply as a military stage, wrote a letter to Russia expressing a desire of peace. Around 1780s Sprengtporten (1740-1819) drew a plan of an independent Finland that influenced greatly the court of Russia in the nineteenth century. These actions were accompanied by an ever-growing sense of "Finnish-ness". In defining it, Juslenius (1676-1752) even fanaticized that finnic culture was connected to Greek and Hebrew and there had been a great prehistoric Finnish civilization. On the other hand, Porthan (1739-1804) tried to anchor this lost great civilization from folklore and to further consolidate Finnish ethnicity by language, he established the Aurora Society to promote local culture and published the first local newspaper in Swedish.

This intellectual movement continued and grew even stronger into the second half of the nineteenth century after the Crimean War in the 1850s.

Nourished by the Enlightenment and the Romanticism, those upper class Swedish-speaking elites studied overseas in continental Europe or belonged to Stockholm intellectual circle, started to forge a romantic nationalism through a Fennomanic movement. Of which the motto was "***Swedes we are no more, Russians we cannot become, therefore Finns we must be*** (Kinge ed. 2003)". This eventually established Finnish language and finnic culture predominant, from peasant status to the leading position of a national language and culture, when the grand duchy of Finland found itself suddenly without the tsar being its duke in 1917 and left independent. Different from countries like Norway who won independency from (Swedish) foreign rule or Germany who united into one based on linguistic, cultural, and ethnic ground (Smith 1995, Thomasett 1997), those Swedish-speaking elites in Finland of the nineteenth century who tried to build up a "national identity" from Russia could not share the same grounds, because linguistically or ethnically speaking they were not Finnish. Therefore, in art making, they sought to create a collective identity artistically, culturally and politically of painting, music, architecture, and literature—some Swedish writers thence started to write also in Finnish.

CULTURAL POLICY ON MUSEUM FOR NATION BUILING

Traditionally, collection forms the base of museum foundation and serves as the starting point of relevant knowledge building and dissemination. This has been made explicit in the development of European museum history: from Alexander's garden in Antiquity, Middle Ages church treasure, royal art collection after Renaissance and cabinet of curiosity during the Enlightenment Era, until modern museum opened to the public after the French Revolution (Schaer 1993). Also revealed here is the close tie between museum collection and certain concentrated socioeconomic power along different epoch. The above-mentioned historical background of Finland becoming a nation-state in 1917 has hinted a museum culture and history rather exceptional as it was almost non-existent the so-called high art and high culture as material evidence to form any classical museum collection, as often seen elsewhere in Europe.

Peasantry seemingly did not achieve or leave much tangible cultural heritage preserved as archaeological finds, historical monuments, or refined artefacts. There were only twenty sites reported to the Antiquities College in Stockholm by the appointed clergy in late seventeenth century (NBA 2015). Besides, those few church heritages were found small and humble though could be dated back to the medieval time. Furthermore there was not any part of royal art collection or cabinet of curiosity kept here locally from Stockholm or St. Petersburg, and very few private art collections bought by those newly-rich during the time of industrialization were left. Therefore when thriving to forge a sense of nationalism against the tsar's russification (Thaden 1981), those Swedish-speaking elites could not but find works of art made by

themselves, their peers or students during the nineteenth century as material support.

This bottom-up way of cultural identity construction—by assembling contemporaneous material objects to compose a collective memory and identity in Finland—actually resonates the idea of "new museology" about one hundred years later in France. In any case, several knowledge societies were established by these Fennomanic elites, and relevant collections were accumulated underneath that later on became actual contents of Finnish museum institutes. E.g. the 1870 Finnish Antiquarian Society's documentation of historical monuments became the content of National Museum of Finland under the administration of the National Board of Antiquity (NBA 2015); the 1846 Finnish Art Society's collection became basis of the National Gallery including Ateneum Museum and Kiasma Contemporary Art Museum (Ateneum 2015); the 1821 Societas Pro Fauna et Flora Fennica donated part of its collection to the 1924 National Museum of Natural History integrated into the University of Helsinki (Skyten 2015); and the 1831 Finnish Literature Society (Saturday Society) holds the biggest oral history collection in the world still today.

Characteristics or results of this museum rush responding to specific sociopolitical request in using arts and culture to brand a nation-state's identity as cultural policy, are that: 1) museum quantiy surpasses quality; 2) all museums are supported by public funding, either central or municipal, fully or partially; 3) only one third (Goodnow & Akman ed. 2008) are run by professionals; 4) most are open seasonally, half day, few days a week, or by appointment; 5) typical functions as collection, research, exhibition, and education (Alexander 1979) are performed separately by a single institute or collectively by a nexus of certain museums. Besides, as architecture is a potent instrument and token expressing sentiment of nationalism (Giebelhausen ed. 2003, Gervits 2012, Quek et al. ed. 2012), Finland complied as well to this trend at the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century by building up several museums buildings with the so-called "Finnish characteristics" (Asyby 2012, Kansallisgalleria).

Also worth noticing is that the "nationalization" of those collections owned by various intellectual societies took a very long time. E.g. The ownership over the art collection held by the Finnish Art Society was transferred to the State, staying at where they were stored and displayed in Ateneum Museum, only in 1990 (Levanto 1987). Apart from the collection, the transformation or expansion of these organizations can reveal a social history of Finnish arts and culture. Very often, those societies established by the Swedish-speaking elites would continue to exist after transferring some of their main tasks or collections to another organizations (often Finnish-speaking) founded later, with original founding members and minor tasks left. The Finnish Art Society is a good example, versus the Finnish Academy of Art

Foundation founded in 1939 taking over its collection and role of art education. This sociocultural divide between Finnsih and Swedish communities was rooted since the birth of the country, and became an invisible line that expanded all the way from arts and culture to economic and political landscape. It is not too much to say that although it was the Swedish-speaking group took the initiative to forge a sense of nationalism, culturally and politically and started to educate then often-being-oppressed Finnish community, it seems natural today that younger generations of the latter would take over the power of decision making after being educated as they anyhow outnumbered the former being the majority of the coutnry's population. First complaints of Finnish-speaking artists towards those Swedish-speaking founders and members of those societies, such as Gallen-Kallela (Pettersson 2015), were heard in the thirtieth concerning justice in arts competition and grant issue, about one generation away from the nation's formation in 1917. Today, the only service language of the "national collection" online system is Finnish. This power transition with political sensitiveness somehow went unspoken in terms of the country's cultural policy design and implementation.

As said, this cultural divide within the nation-state of Finland was embedded as early as the Fennomanic movement took its initiation. Back then, those Swedish-speaking elites, if not moving back to their motherland, as Jacob Frese and Frans Mikael Franzén, had maintained very close relations with the intellectual circle of Sweden, e.g. the Turku Romantics stood ideologically close to the Uppsala Phosphorists (Zuck 2015). Promoting a romantic nationalism not based on their language or ethnicity but on geographical sense and a rather "aboriginal" culture, these Finnicized Swedish-speaking elites might not have expected to be challenged later on and needed to give away their authoritative power in the arts and cultural scene. Encompassed with economic reason, since the thirtieth a steady migration of the Swedish-speaking Finns back to Sweden has started and it somehow continued until now (Westerholm 2002).

INSTRUMENTAL ARTS EDUCATION

Art education, being constantly redefined with its cross-disciplinary nature and enlarging content along technology advancement, plays an important role in achieving Finland's renowned success in education. Bresler (2007) noted the trendy phenomenon to replace "art education" with "arts education" indicating that all art genres as music, visual art, drama, and dance tend to be put under the umbrella of "the arts". The thirteen subjects of the colossal handbook Bresler edited has well described current development of art education relevant studies in Finland: history, curriculum, assessment and evaluation, composition, appreciation, museum and cultural centers, informal learning, child culture, social and cultural issues, the body, creativity, technology, and spirituality. In the article "Capitalizing art education: mapping

international histories" Stankiewicz suggested a possible way to describe various stage of arts education: from prehistory to Renaissance, elite's amateur liberal art education during national formation 1600-1800, capitalism and middle-class aspirations 1800-1850, industrial impact 1850-1910, ideology of child artist 1910-1960, and intellectual rigor 1960 until now (Bresler 2007, 7). Although this periodization is not universally valid with a sole focus on the English-speaking area, it somehow reflects a partial truth in terms of Finland, notably the amateur art education of those Swedish-speaking elites around the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, whereas started officially the first chapter of Finnish art history, cultural history, literature history, and arts education history.

As described above, the arts and culture bearing "Finnish features" did not exist until those Fennomanic Swedish-speaking elites thrived to construct a romantic Finnish nationalism. In the beginning, there was nothing. Not only they could not find material evidence of cultural heritage to support their ideation of a nation, they also realized that the practice and knowledge of art making were practically void. It was from continental Europe they brought back this art-making convention and set up those societies. However, their European models were set originally to express artists' discontent towards goods of mass production from industrialization, here these Finnish copies were nevertheless found standing alone in a soil without any arts tradition, as Zachris Topelius had exaggerated with his synical remark "visual art in Finland were to be found only on curtains and wallpapers" (Petterson 2015). Therefore, the primary missions of these arts societies were to cultivate Finnish art maker and audience, in another words, to invent the Finnish art world from scratch. Apart from Helsinki Music Institute in 1882 starting music education, Finnish Literature Society in 1831 has further established Finnish as a literary language instead of continuing the Swedish literature tradition, and then Finnish Artist Society in 1846 created the visual art scene completely, from teaching art to founding museum collection and from organizing raffle to holding exhibition.

It was under these semi-private and semi official institutionalized efforts that the arts started to grow in Finland. Four years after the establishment, Finnish Artist Society opened its Drawing School in 1848 and started purchasing artworks as teaching models in addition to those donated ones by its board members. This School educated the first "Finnish artists", e.g. Albert Edelfelt, Axel Gallen, Helene Schjerfbeck, and Ellen Thesleff (uniarts.fi). Their works were said to have strong "Finnish features" and some of them were collected by the Society and became "national collection" later on. This development not only reflects a primitive cultural policy rooted in intellectual, nationalism, and the arts as Sokka and Kangas (2007) claimed, but also indicates the strong instrumental view on the arts from this cradle time of Finnish arts education. Based on a socio-historical perspective, Sokka (2007)

further argues that arts and culture can be a "realized signifying system" of public cultural policy engaged with contingency of human action and public nature of political action. It is clear that "l'art pour l'art (art for art's sake)" as a matured philosophical thinking of art in the early nineteenth century France did not reach Finland, especially with those soieties' founding members and later art educators preoccupied in building up a nation-state with a romantic nationalist sentiment seeded, embodied, and performed in their and their students' artworks. This nationalist characteristic of art making and art education, has been integrated into formal education curriculum and informal education system right away when the nation came into being, and has continued over the twentieth century until today.

Although little studied still, some scholars have suggested that arts education has contributed to the overall success of Finnish education, which is renowned worldwide (Baker 2012, Hancock 2011, Rubin 2012). The country's minister of education said in an interview in 2014:

> *Regardless of a person's gender, background, or social welfare status, everyone should have an equal chance to make the most of their skills. It's important because we are raising the potential of the entire human capital in Finland. (Gross-Loh 2014)*

This claim has well illustrated the instrumental viewpoint on education with the arts involved, as she went on saying in the same interview that why hands-on creative activities compose important part of classrooms is because pupils "benefit more from handcrafts, cooking, creative pursuits, and sports". Garber (2002) as well concluded the reasons to keep arts education robust in schools are:

> *1) cognitive development in several dimensions, 2) learning about the living world, 3) Finnish traditions and culture, 4) school and individual growth, and 5) a break from the demands of academic subjects.*

Although the policy analysis reports on arts education and cultural education (2010) shows that in terms of primary schools the teaching hours of the arts has largely decreased from 1985 to 1993, and again decreased since 2001, the arts education activities have been increased in the informal education system since the 1980s (Heinimaa 2015). A document from the association of Finnish arts education for youngsters entitled "Basic education of art, media, architecture and design to children and young people" shows that local authorities providing basic arts education receives statutory government transfers, and all public and private arts education providers can acquire government grants. Besides, in constructing a history of cultural policy in Finland Sokka and Kangas (2007) divide the historical timeline into three

periods: 1) nation building 1860-1960, 2) the welfare state 1960-90, and 3) competitiveness society 1990-now. This viewpoint again confirms the instrumental role the arts and culture played in Finland's history. The arts education firstly serves nationalism in the aim of creating an independent nation-state from the tsar. Then it became a tool to cultivate best "human capital" when establishing the country's welfare system spirited with an education philosophy in equality, non-competitiveness, collaboration, free education, individual right of teacher and student, and so on. Now the turn towards neoliberalism has become a hot topic in many post-welfare societies. Finland as well, is trying to re-define the role of arts and culture for the 21st century embracing the third industrial revolution and global economy.

NEW DIRECTION OF THE ARTS

As known, the political concept of "left" and "right" has been evolved since these terms firstly appeared during the French Revolution in 1789. Today a spectrum from the left, the central to the right is often used to depict various political position, ideology, and party. In fact, the "right" supported by the Old Finn Party, the Swedish People's Party, and other non-Socialist parties had once won over the "left" at the dawn of Finland's independence. However, the abdication of the German prince Friedrich Karl to assume the Finnish throne had made space for the "left" composed by the Agrarian League, the Social Democrats, and the Progressives to win the absolute majority in parliament in 1919 and decided Finland as a republican rather than monarchy. Different from political settings, the Finnish economic structure was traditionally with characteristics not very "right" although Finland is considered "the most American country in Europe" before the European Union came into being (Lavery 2006, 14). Although greeted the liberalist by the 1860s and welcomed the neo-liberalist during the 1990s, Finland, just like other Northern countries held a mix economy with welfare social structure.

Arts and culture under this socioeconomic system, has a functional role in strengthening national identity and increasing quality education, as discussed above, as well as in enhancing social wellbeing (Liikkanen 2010, Brandenburg 2009). Artworks are therefore seldom considered as commodity but means of self-expression, mental health, and emotional comfort (Ruismäki & Ruokonen ed. 2011). Besides, comparatively abundant funding opportunities, fair fiscal structure, and strong social welfare system contribute to provide artists a rather stable though moderate financial life if opting to be self-employed independent art professionals. Notwithstanding, a recent anthology edited by Triisberg, Krikortz, and Henriksoon entitled "Art workers, material conditions and labour struggles in contemporary art practice" (2015) through a collaboration among artists from Finland, Sweden, and Estonia has summarized a collective sentiment of dissatisfaction about the material compensation of their works. This hardened situation for artists is actually a reflection of the economic recession.

The deep recession in 1990s has provoked cultural policy makers in Finland to have critical view on governmental administration and intervention of mix economic welfare system and to start to consider possible alternatives. The economic crisis around 2007 again has reinforced the will to make change with pro-Thatcherism attitude. The following statement of a national project named Creative Industries Finland 2007-2013 has well declared this move.

> *The development of business activity within the creative industries is being promoted in response to the structural reform related to production and the economy. This has seen the focus of production shift from the material to the immaterial. Such a change requires new types of competence. This is the message of the development programme for business growth and internationalisation in the creative industries. (Rakennerahastot.fi)*

Thence arts and culture are expected to generate tangible value. This turn is followed by further conception that artistic creativity should be fused into innovation economy of advanced science and technology. Hautamäki's article "Creative economy and culture at the heart of innovation policy" (Minedu 2010) quoted Landry's concept of bridging culture to creativity through "hard" and "soft" infrastructures in suggesting that arts and culture can be an inspiration for creativity, which is essential to innovation economy. He specifically mentioned here the Guggenheim Bilbao example. This further turn also demonstrates itself in the re-organization of cultural heritage institutes. The Finnish National Gallery became an independent public foundation in 2014 with a promise to enable stronger online presence of its collections (Kansallisgalleria.fi). Although not yet declared a concrete future working plan, this organizational transformation has strengthened the mobility and efficiency of the network of its subordinating three museums (Ateneum, Kiasma, and Sinebrychoff) with successful international tour exhibitions and highest records of exhibition visits. It is the American model of "foundation managed museum institute" that this new operation model is looking up to. The notable example is of course, the Guggenheim, which employs cutting-edge media technology to communicate, promote, and maximize for example its copyright economy, to name just but one, among its many other successful global arts business.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Analyzing the historical context from various perspectives, it became clear why appeared the Guggenheim Helsinki Plan and politicians supported it. The greatest expectation from the government's perspective is perhaps to prosper Finland's creative economy and cultural industry through this museum brand and its global venues. However, the majority of art workers seemed not trusting it. However difficult it is to predict the future, hints and

insights might be discovered looking into the past and that is the rationale of this paper. Besides, a few issues might be worth considering amidst this turn in the arts and culture from socio-democratic tradition towards neo-liberalism. E.g. Contemporary art market mechanism and its socioeconomic context, the evolvement of art's value from intangible to tangible might involve structural variance between different societies, and the challenge of "human capital" facing "social capital", a concept being promoted by Portman (2013) in providing solution to the crisis of "American dream".

As a matter of fact, the relationship between arts and economics has become a heated subject since recent years, viewing the prosperous scenery painted by commercial gallery, art fair, biennale, auction, art collector, private and public foundation, art investment, star-artist, critic, museum, art center, and so on. Finland stays quite far from this glamorous world. Remembering that it was starting from scratch those Swedish-speaking elites had built up the Finnish art world. Completely upon their personal effort, they could not but had to be content with copies instead of original works from those European art masters. Nor could they envision building up at the same time a similar convention of art market as in Netherland and Britain starting from the seventeenth century (Houdt 1999, Zablotney 1999). Prior to this time, in continental Europe art itself with various form, medium, style, and value as well as the professionalization and classification of artist had gone through a long journey with many times socioeconomic change, whereas arts' patron, sponsor or consumer have shifted from or renewed by church authority, royal court, newly-rich middle class, to the common public (Lenman 1997). It is America that shared similar arts reality with Finland. Barber's article "International Art Deal and American Economic Politics 1789-1913" (1999) in discussing the early history about taxation over imported artworks from Europe has not only revealed how the tax exempt system has been founded but also mentioned the liberalist attitude towards arts education. Also starting from scratch, different from Finland who followed the continental European tradition that governments are active sponsors in art school, museum, and artist, America adopted an liberal attitude right from the start: to cancel protectionism towards domestic artist, to purchase quality artworks from Europe with tax exempt, and to participate international art market. Barber assumes both protectionist and liberalist held the same acknowledgement: America was left very far behind other countries in arts and culture. Some thought that local artist and audience needed this stimulation from seeing freely circulated first-class artworks to catch up, and it was commonly believed that it was hopeless that America could catch up one day (Barber 1999, 230). However, this American model may have proved to be successful. New York anyhow replaced Paris after the Second World War and became the world's art capital, with important players like the Guggenheim.

The dark side of this seemingly positive result of the American model is that art market often is flooded with dishonest operation, money laundry, and art crime (Robertson ed. 2006). When the value of art becomes straightforwardly tangible, art the visual, becomes a conceptualized item with a price that can be operated as in any stock market. Current contemporary art world is full of this kind of stories, especially with the latest market star—Chinese contemporary art. It is almost impossible for outsiders to catch clues about the intricate contemporary art market mechanism. For instance, it triggers curiosity the relationships among various Guggenheim related organizations: Guggenheim Foundation, Guggenheim Museum(s), Guggenheim Investments, Guggenheim Partners, etc. Besides, the contribution of arts education to increase "human capital" has been proven successful in Finland, and the free-market neoliberalism in the USA has created the crisis of "American dream" and scholars like Putnam has suggested to increase "social capital" following the welfare system of northern countries as a remedy. Should Finland embrace now this American model of neoliberalism using Guggenheim Helsinki Plan as a springboard?

The small-scaled experimental project of art and finance "Robin Hood" (Robinhoodcoop.org) might provide interesting insights. With a dynamic data-mining algorithm that follows US stock markets and acts along, the benefits contribute to a commons and would fund selected public art projects. The game is rather simple, yet the primitive way of bridging arts and finance is thought provoking. As values of stock and art become self-exchangeable and can nourish each other. Perhaps it does not matter eventually which path we choose, right or left. Unlike Robert Frost's two roads diverged in a yellow woods, our two roads (or many roads) in the arts and culture will meet eventually at the same end, as a splendid imprint of humanity, just like those fascinating paintings inside the caves of rock art. What is important is the life choice of every individual, artist or art audience. To consume art as luxury product or to approach it as spiritual activity, this cannot be determined by any design of socioeconomic mechanism.

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IV

MUSEUM COLONIALITY: DISPLAYING ASIAN ART IN THE WHITENED CONTEXT

by

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ARTICLE

Museum coloniality: displaying Asian art in the whitened context

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ABSTRACT
The transformation of Musée Guimet and the transition of museums in the 'countries of origin' of its collections elucidates how *white-cube* crystallises Western cultural hegemony by erasing the colonial past of the objects and by representing the physical form of modernity. It contributes as well to nullifying the demand of repatriation, which seems to merely raise new power struggles rather than to recover indigenous beliefs (or identities). Through such a muséographie, the deities of the *Other* are 'elevated' from ethnographic specimen into art in the West while 'diminished' from sacred icons into art or historical artefacts in Asia. Museumification as such constitutes a whitening (Westernisation) heritage process that physically and epistemologically secularises non-Western faiths. Although the temple-simulated design is applied and limited Buddhist practice allowed in certain exhibition milieu or tourism destination, the phenomenon of museum coloniality is to be further studied should cultural diversity be indispensable for better heritage futures.

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Introduction

Aim and starting point

Originated from Europe, museum culture has spread to the non-Western world thanks to colonialism (Hamlin 1946). After WWII, between 1945 and 1960, three dozen new states achieved autonomy or outright independence from their European colonial rulers. Museums as a colonial institution legacy have suffered little criticism and were well kept and proliferated in these states. Coming into the post-conflict era, even China – the major communist regime behind the Iron (or Bamboo) Curtain – has experienced a museum boom. Through the museum window, it seems that the ways of seeing and using cultural heritage have become identical over the globe with major museums of Western Europe and North America as prototypes. Having signed the *Declaration on the Importance of Universal Museums* (Schuster 2004), the *Musée national des arts asiatiques Guimet* (Musée Guimet, MG) are one of them. Reputed as the 'world's biggest Asian art museum outside of Asia', this museum since the post-War era has been employing the muséographie of white-cube (O'Doherty 1976), which was further refined in the late 1990s with contemporary features of trending architectural style in functionalism and minimalism – tall ceiling, screened natural light, open space, white wall, polished cement floor, white stand, least amount of panel and minimum-sized label – to make the space void of any 'noise' or free of context for underlining the 'beauty' of the objects in the display. Invented for a modern art exhibition by Bauhaus, the use of white-cube in MG implies that aesthetic characteristics of artefacts should be the only norm and value conveyed to the viewers as justified by art historians, whose 'scientific knowledge' has been universalised to the rest of the world over the 20th century. Nevertheless, museum-goers today may find it surprising that the first

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exhibitions of MG were highly 'authentic' to the objects' original cultural contexts, which the founder *Emile Guimet* (1836–1918) had neither concealed nor eliminated but reproduced and presented with elaborate *mise-en-scène* exhibit, theatrical guide, and live performance of religious ritual and dance. In fact, MG was not dedicated to art but religions when built originally in Lyon in 1879 (Francotte 2017). The transformation of MG in Paris (from a private museum of religions to a national and universal museum of art) together with the museum development in the 'countries of origin' (M'Bow, Amadou-Mahtar 1979) of MG's collections in Asia (from the colonial museums of the metropoles to the national museums of independent states) provides an impeccable example illustrating how the religious objects of the *Other* are turned from ethnographic specimen to works of art in the West and from sacred relics to art or historical artefacts in Asia.

It is based on the observation as such that the research design of this paper is constructed. Focusing on the curatorial practice and the exhibition format embodied in the white-cube through which the epistemological transformation has advanced covering the deification of art, and the commodification of cultural object, this paper (centred around MG and its peers in Asia) aim to investigate a set of general museum(s) presentations using the concept of 'coloniality' to provoke more thoughts on the global hegemony of Western forms and practices of cultural modernity, the legitimacy of white-cube and how to decolonise the museums (and collections) of the *Other* both in the West and in Asia.

Although the studies on the contextualization of museum objects are already abundant (Ivan. and Lavine 1991; Dean 1996) and the postcolonial museology thriving (MacLeod 1998; Chambers et al. 2016; Tlostanova 2017; Soares and Leshchenko 2018), it remains still absent an investigation on the configurable and shifting relationship between the 'form' (physical space) and 'content' (conceptual space) of exhibition milieu (in Western universal museums and Asian national museums) at meta-level under the premises of postcolonialism, especially in light of the paradox resulted from the museumification of (religious) heritage artefacts and the secularisation of local beliefs in the countries of origin – a question far beyond what repatriation can resolve. With a phenomenological inquiry from a multidisciplinary and transcultural perspective, this research constitutes a novel approach to understanding the subject of 'museum coloniality', of which the findings will fix the critical knowledge gap between the theoretical discussions of heritage and museum studies, art history, postcolonial studies, cultural policy and sociocultural anthropology.

Conceptual framework

To delineate the knowledge landscape of 'museum coloniality' manifested by MG and its Asian variations, a literature review is accomplished on the themes of postcolonialism, white-cube and museum effect with a focus on the topic of museum and religion.

The term 'coloniality' is rooted in the subaltern studies and proposed by Quijano to denote the role the Western cultural hegemony plays in the modernisation of non-Western countries (Mignolo 2007). Since 'eurocentrism' is insufficient to provide a viable explanation, coloniality is expected to better clarify the interrelations between the colonial metropoles and the colonies in the social order, a system of knowledge, value and culture (Morana, Dussel, and Jaurequi 2008; Mignolo, Silverblatt, and Saldívar-hull 2011). Based mainly on the settler societies in the Americas, the notion is rarely employed to the non-settler ones in Asia. Despite the rich results of examining museum institution since like mentioned, the studies on the exhibition *per se* are limited either on the technical matters embracing visitor studies or on the education or mediation dimension facing local audiences of the hosting institutes. White-cube as a muséographie (exhibition design), much criticised in contemporary art, has not been explored in particular in museum studies. Referring to a predominant modern art gallery aesthetic, it in actuality was invented by Bauhaus in 1923 to 'give modernity a physical form' to show the objects in the display as 'abstract, vibrant and free from historicism' (O'Doherty 1976; Cain 2017). Although the Nazi authority condemned the Bauhaus School as degenerated, it has endorsed this muséographie by the *Great German Art Exhibition* at the Haus der Kunst inaugurated in

Munich in 1937. At the same time, the style is characterised by square or oblong shape space, white walls and a light source usually from the ceiling has become a standard format to present art as seen in Western Europe and North America. Thence the physical white-cube turned out to be the material ground for the understanding in art history 'context becomes content' (O'Doherty 1976, 65–86), which resonates with Derrida's '*il n'y a pas de hors-text*[1]' in literary criticism (Derrida, Definitions Introduction, Deconstruction Deconstructing, Barthes Differences, and Foucault References 2004) and Latour's 'medium is the message' in social sciences (Latour 2005). Furthermore, white-cube echoes with the concept of 'museum effect' firstly noticed by Malraux in the 1960s and further discussed by Alpers (Alpers 1990) in explaining that museum 'elevates' ordinary objects by giving them importance and value. This elevation (or valorisation) is also contributed by the 'gaze' of the visitor (Casey 2003). As the aesthetic inflexion given by museum can turn mundane objects into interesting things to be looked at attentively, the requirement of 'visual interest' for the exhibited objects becomes primary (Henning 2006). Besides, such 'elevating' is further fortified through museum education, as museum works to civilise (Duncan 1995) and to educate (Smith 2014) the society. In this light, displaying the religious objects of the *Other* as art in the white-cube of the museum especially in the geocultural context of the *Other* becomes problematic. In fact, an emerging study on 'museum and religions' have reflected this concern. Paine considers that the religious artefacts can fulfil their duties and turn the museum into a shrine promoting their owners' faiths (Paine 2000, 2013). Sullivan evaluates the exhibitions of Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism and studied the relationship between religion, museum and memory (Sullivan 2015). As wide as such discussions can be covering the aspects of architecture, conservation, curatorship, digital engagement and visitor studies (Buggeln, Paine, and Plate 2017), they are mostly from the perspective of museum curators and neglect the fundamental difference between museum and churches or temple as well as the connection to postcolonialism. While 'religious diversity' or 'religious pluralism' (Basinger 2015) are assumed, this research furthers the studies in reflecting on how the white-cube effect conceals or negates the original meaning of the objects in the display by 'diminishing' the religious connotation into mere philosophical thinking (Siderits 2007) or anthropological knowledge, and by 'elevating' the visual attractions into fine art aesthetics (Corbey, Layton, and Tanner 2008). While white-cube continues to dominate the museum scene, experimental exhibition design has materialised to simulate a shrine-like space for displaying Buddhist art using darker wall colour or dimmer lighting in the background. Limited religious practices also became allowed in certain exhibitions of cultures or world heritage destinations. However, the fundamental gap between secular museum (knowledge institute) and sacred temple (religious milieu) remains irreconcilable; still, and this can be crucial to the (re)vitalisation of the living religious traditions or cultures in Asia.

Although museum objects have many lives (Tythacott 2011), the milieu of exhibition predetermines their immediate identity and meaning. However, similar to a church (Farago 2015) in inviting the visitor's sacred gaze (Morgan 2005), museum endorses science, a rationalism, which as described in the feminism studies (Nhanenge 2011, 189), or the indigenous studies (Semali and Kincheloe 1999) is 'Western, white, male, bourgeois and elite'. It is in this light that the symbol or metaphor of the 'whitened' context substantiates to denote the globalisation of museum praxis and the universalisation of Western knowledge, norm and value – both together contribute to altering the social function and the ontological or epistemological understanding of the religious collections in the universal museums and especially in their 'countries of origin', the former colonies.

Methodology and scope

Traversing a vague terrain, theoretically, historically and geographically, this research uses a semi-structured comparative approach with historical methods as literature review and archive survey as well as exhibition evaluation on the general histories and presentations of MG and (selected) national museums in the 'countries of origin' of MG's collections in Asia. The exhibits of mandala statues in MG in Paris and Toji in Kyoto will be discussed to illustrate the difference between the white-cube of the

museum and the original context of the temple. The study materials include the publications of catalogue, report and virtual presentation of the museums in question. The included visuals centred around MG are to provide readers with a mediated empirical understanding on how displaying Asian religious objects as art in the white-cube of museum crystallises the heritage process of 'whitening' – which to the West signifies a cancelling of colonial thinking (decolonisation) and to the rest a manifestation of modernisation (a quasi-synonym of Westernisation). Knowing that decolonisation means to return the occupied land or property and to gain sovereignty and independency (Kennedy 2016), the findings will shed some new light on the argument over repatriation between universal museums and the countries of origin (Gill 2008; Cuno 2013; Peers and Brown 2005), especially when the 'important collections' held by the former have remained unreturned (except prioritised human remains or ethnological items) (Harris 2018; Hickley 2019), unexhibited or unstudied. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, the study results will question the legitimacy of white-cube and contribute to the ongoing debate of 'decolonising museum' (Preciado 2014; Petršin-Bachelez 2015; Tlostanova 2017) or 'decolonising cultural heritage' (Weiner 2016).

Transformation of Musée Guimet

Private museum of religions under orientalism in the Belle Époque

The history of Musée Guimet started from the personal collections of Émile Guimet (1836–1918) – the heir of a family business (the Pechiney) of manufacturing the 'artificial ultramarine'. Leading a typical bourgeois life, this gentleman embodied the *zeitgeist* of the time as a composer, antiquarian (or Orientalist) and patron of the school, orchestra and theatre in the belief that art should be a potent instrument for the moral progress of advanced society. Inspired Musée Guimet in a touristic voyage to Egypt in 1865, he became interested in 'the creators of philosophic systems' because 'the founders of religions' (as Lao-Tzu, Confucius, Zoroaster, Plato, Jesus and Mahomet) had shared similar ideas and had, respectively, proposed needed social solutions (Francotte 2017). In 1873, he joined the Association of Japanese, Chinese, Tartars and Indochinese Studies and organised the very first International Congress of Orientalists, which became an important venue to share findings and exchange information and largely contributed to the 'race of antiquities' in Central Asia during the Great Game. In 1874, he visited Copenhagen and was impressed by the pedagogic quality of the Museum of Ethnography (Hauer 2020). In 1876, he accepted the commission from Jules Ferry, the Minister of Public Instruction of Cults and Fine Arts, and made an expedition to Japan, China and India, entailed with a scientific report and a private collection – part of which was exhibited in the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* (which was to resurrect France from the Franco-Prussian War) under the theme *Religions de l'Extrême-Orient*. At the same time, he started in Lyon to build a 'museum of religions' to gather 'under the same ceiling all the gods of humankind'. By the end of 1879, the museum was inaugurated in the presence of Jules Ferry. But a few years later, the Lyon municipality cancelled the sponsorship as local visitors were little interested. Émile Guimet then proposed to move the museum to Paris with a few conditions: the new museum should have the same architecture, bear his name, make him the sole curator for life and receive an annual subsidy of 45,000 francs. In 1885, according to *la loi du 7 août*, the Deputy Chamber ratified the contract and the private MG was 'nationalised' into *bien national* with the State being the proprietor of the museum and the collection. In 1889, under the presence of the President of the Republic, Sadi Carnot (1837–1894), the museum was opened at *La place d'Iéna* in Paris.

National museum of art in imperialism and the postcolonial era

> *[...] si je me suis occupé de philosophie, si j'ai fondé le Musée des Religions, c'était pour donner aux travailleurs le moyen d'être heureux. Pour obtenir ce résultat, j'ai consulté l´histoire des civilisations, j'ai recherché dans tous les pays, quels hommes avaient voulu faire le bonheur des autres, et j'ai trouvé que c´étaient tous les fondateurs de religions.*[2] *(Beaumont 2014)*

As seen in the public speech quoted above given in 1910, Émile Guimet has made it explicit that above all he regarded the religions of the *Other* as philosophies and his Museum of Religions a way to make workers happy. Since a museum of religions should be a collection of ideas (De Milloue 1900), under his curatorship pedagogic means became essential to interpret and deliver the ideas the objects embodied. In addition to financing numerous publications, he had organised several expositions of archaeological expeditions to Asia in the premises. Nevertheless, all has changed after his deceased in 1918. To 'magnify the colonial empire', the government of the Third Republic decided to turn this nationalised establishment into a museum of art. Since the museum was reestablished in Paris and attached to the *Direction des musées de France*, it began to receive similar collections from other organisations (Héron 2001), for example, the Korean collection of Charles Vrat (1842–1893), the Central Asian collections of Paul Pelliot and Édouard Chavannes (in 1927), the collection of the Délégation Archaéologique Français en Afghanistan and the Tibetan collection of Jacque Bacot (1877–1965). After WWII, becoming a department to Louvre, part of a vast reorganisation of the national collections, MG continued to obtain more Asiatic artworks and give away those that were ethnographic in nature (or not qualified as high art). Becoming the very first Asian art museum in the world since then, the museum kept growing in collection and scholarship in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1970s a new museology was formed and the neoclassical decorations were removed. From private property to a national institute, the original goal of MG to address the public good was replaced by showing the achievements of the gone empire.

Universal museum with internationalism in the global age

Coming into the 21st century, under a general policy to consolidate the museum's role as a knowledge institute catering to an increasing public interest in Asian civilisations, a thorough renovation was initiated in the late 1990s. In consequence, the interior design was renewed as mentioned in the beginning and the Buddhist Pantheon re-furnished to display the original collections of Émile Guimet brought back from his expedition to Asia. Reopened in 2001, Musée Guimet asserted itself 'as a major centre, in the heart of Europe, for the appreciation and knowledge of Asian civilisations, while also taking into consideration the latest developments in museum science and new requirements for the display and conservation of artworks'. It is noted in its introduction that the status of GM as an art museum is 'in line with the efforts of all its previous directors and curatorial staff'. The white-cube like said was given a contemporary feature by the architects, Henri and Bruno Gaudin, to give natural lighting, reorganise the interior space and create open perspectives so that it would be easier for the visitors to grasp the interrelations and differences between the various artistic traditions in Asia. Shortly after the grand reopening, in 2002, the director of MG joined with other 17 directors of major museums in Western Europe and North America in signing the aforementioned *Declaration*, published by the British Museum, in response to Greece's demand of repatriation for the Parthenon Marbles. Like the *Declaration* claimed, MG, as a 'universal (or encyclopaedia) museum', is to preserve the cultural heritage of mankind and meant for all peoples, including those from the 'countries of origin' of its collections.

Primary museums in the countries of origin in Asia

From colonial museum to national museum after independence

A review on the histories of primary museums in the 'countries of origin' of Musée Guimet's collections in Asia reveal that: almost every single one of them (be it the first or the largest museum in the country) was built either directly by the colonial powers from the metropoles or then indirectly under their influences.

Following the path of colonisation, in the former British Empire we see that the Indian Museum (or the Imperial Museum at Calcutta) came from the Asiatic Society of Bengal created by Sir William

Jones in 1784; and the National Museum of India (New Delhi) (inaugurated in 1949) from an exhibition of Indian art and artefacts held by the Royal Academy of Arts in 1946 in London. In Sri Lanka, a national status in 1942, the Colombo National Museum was established in 1877 by the British Governor of Ceylon, Sir William Henry Gregory (1872–1877). Separated from the British India in 1937, the Myanmar (the British Berman) had the National Museum Yangon built-in 1952 to demonstrate the Burmese culture and history with folk art, buddhist art, ethnography, performing art and natural history. The National Museum (Malaysia) (opened in 1963) was based on the Selangor Museum, created by the British and Selangor government in 1898 following the formation of the Federated Malay States in 1896. In the former Dutch Empire, the National Museum of Indonesia (opened in 1950) was based on the work of the Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences in Batavia, founded in 1778. In the influence zone of the United States, the National Museum of the Philippines came from the Insular Museum of Ethnology, Natural History, and Commerce, constructed in 1901 by the Philippine Commission (appointed by the President of the United States) and renamed in 1904 as the Bureau of Ethnological Survey (responsible for participating the Louisiana Purchase Exposition). In the former French colonial empire, the National Museum of Vietnamese History (opened in 1958) was originated from the archaeological research institution of the *École française d'Extrême-Orient*, created in 1908. Being part of Indochina, Laos had the Lao National Museum built in 1985 on the site of a French colonial mansion, constructed in 1925. And the National Museum of Cambodia was France's Musée National de Phnom Penh, created in 1920 based on the work of George Groslier (1887–1945). Ceded to the Cambodian government in 1951 and after the independence in 1953, it became a 'subject of bilateral accords' (not until 1966 was elected the first non-French curator). In the former Empire of Japan, the National Museum of Korea (opened in 1945) came from the Imperial Household Museum, established in 1909, and the Japanese Government General Museum, built-in 1929. In the few countries that remained (partially) independent at the time, we see that the Bangkok National Museum was founded in 1874 by King Chulalongkorn, who succeeded to modernise the country through socio-political reforms and signing concessions to the British and French empires. In China, the Nantong Museum (founded in 1905) was inspired by Japan's *National Industrial Exposition* in 1903 and the imperial museum (now the Tokyo National Museum). As to Japan (a semi-colonised country turning into a coloniser), the said national museum was created in 1872 (after the Meiji Reform in 1868) based on the exhibition prepared for participating the *Exposition Universelle* in Vienna in 1873.

Taking over the colonial museums after independence, local governments instead of overthrowing this colonial legacy, on the contrary, have retained and strengthened it by keeping the museum performance and white-cube legitimacy intact under a 'national' status – the highest level of common museum administration system within a modern state, ranging from local to municipal, provincial, regional and national, often used to showcase the country's cultural identity in principle.

world culture destination under the auspices of UNESCO-UN

After WWII, Southeast Asia became the battleground for civil wars or proxy wars between the communist and the anti-communist forces. This episode was also marked in the transition of colonial museums from the coloniser to the colonised. For instance, different names of the museum were given by different parties, the prolonged control of the museum by metropole and the propaganda use of the museum by the revolutionary authority. For socio-economic and political reasons, the archaeological interest and heritage process of local ruins have continued after the wars. To offer help, the World Heritage List was created by UNESCO as an intergovernmental platform and mechanism to link heritage protection and development work through cultural tourism, which contributed to the making of heritage diplomacy (Winter 2015).

Two prominent success stories of the UNESCO endeavours are the Mahayana Buddhist temple Borobudur in Indonesia and the Hindu-Buddhist temple complex Angkor Wat in Cambodia.

Borobudur, rediscovered under the British administration by the Lieutenant Governor-General Thomas Stamford Raffles in 1814, began to attract wide attention in the West in 1885 (thanks to the study of a Dutch engineer and Chairman of the Archaeological Society in Yogyakarta) was 'safeguarded' by the Dutch East Indies government in 1900 (Bloembergen and Eickhoff 2020). Yet since then prestigious Buddhist statues of the site become collector items and ended up in major Western museums, including MG. Similarly, Angkor Wat, visited by António da Madelena (a Portuguese Capuchin friar) in 1589, became known to the West via the scientific expedition of Henri Mouhot (1826–1861), a French naturalist and explorer. In 1908, the *École française d'Extrême-Orient* created the *Conservation d'Angkor* to work on the site and to 'safeguard' it until the Khmer Rouge seized the power (Glancey 2017). Like Borobudur, copious masterpieces of Angkor Wat became are the permanent collections of Western museums, including and especially MG. In the post-colonial era, for Borobudur, Belgium, Cyrus, France, Germany and Australia answered the call of UNESCO and signed the agreement on the *Voluntary Contribution to be Given for the Execution of the Project to Preserve Borobudur* in 1973. Similarly, Angkor Wat received support from the Archaeological Survey of India between 1986 and 1992. In 1992, it began to acquire aids from France, Japan, China and Germany for restoration, conservation and management of the heritage site as answered by UNESCO to the President's appeal. Such heritage enterprise often resulted in the making of new museums. For example, the Karmawibhangga Museum was built in 1983 inside the Borobudur Archaeological Park; the Angkor National Museum was opened in 2007, operated by the Thai Vilailuck International Holdings based in Bangkok and based on the collections loaned from the Cambodian National Museum and the said *Conservation d'Angkor* (Rowan and Baram 2004).

The whitening

Collecting the other

Ethnographic exhibition with Authenticity

To build 'an institute or laboratory which served first to illustrate teaching of founders of religions', the early exhibitions of Musée Guimet in Lyon faithfully followed Émile Guimet's idea to display authentic Asian cultures. Under the guidance of ethnography, *mise-en-scène* exhibits of religious rituals and practices are installed in Figure 1. In which, the intangible interconnection between artefacts and people (users) was manifested in a naturalistic and realistic way. Moving to Paris, in the new premises the museum applied an educative muséographie with packs of vitrines, scattered spotlights, walls full of photographs and paintings to explain the original objects (and duplicates) in the display (Héron 2001) Figure 2. This pedagogic method was embodied as well in the design of visiting line to simulate the spreading of Buddhism from India to Southeast Asia, Central Asia and the Far East. Although the interior of neo-Greek style (including a round room in dark red with Egyptian colons surrounded the panorama under the doom) has made the space dense and shady, difficult for the visitor to 'read' the objects, the pedagogical purpose of Émile Guimet for his 'museum of religions' was made prominent.

Exhibiting non-Western religious art

After the War in 1945, MG was reopened as part of Louvre, applying the muséographie of white-cube (Stern 1948) Figure 3. Being a museum specialised into 'art', the curatorial rationale of art history crept in (Francotte 2017). The successors of Émile Guimet were mostly art historians, for example, Stern had expertise in ancient Cambodian art, Auboyer in classic Indian art, Jarrige in Indo–Pakistan art and Frank in Japonisme. To demonstrate art, many Buddhists statues were removed from the exhibition room to the storage due to their aesthetic flaws (including the duplicates of Toji sculptures in Figure 2). At the turn of the last millennium, like said the latest version of white-cube was made with the aforementioned features: the original colour of raw material (as metal or cement), natural light, open and airy space and sparse and uncluttered display Figure 4. Making void of historical, social and cultural context,

Figure 1. Confucianism ceremony before the ancestor's portrait in Musée Guimet in Lyon (public domain).

this design philosophy appears to be identical to the one used in the boutique of high end products – which has an architecture tradition from modern department stores, emerged a century ago for the industrialised commercial society (Whitaker 2011, 7). While the boutique takes up the image of the museum to elevate its product value (Joy et al. 2014), the millenium look of MG further advances how to valorise the objects in aesthetics to the extreme as seen in the commercial gallery of contemporary art, under the category of luxury goods. Eventually, the deities of the *Other* while being an art 'abstract, vibrant and free of historicity' in a white-cube are equivalent to the commodities on the art market, considering that a gilt-bronze figure of bodhisattva today can be sold for 2,060,000 USD (Sotheby's 2019). The collections of MG are *de facto* invaluable, by all definitions to any cultures.

White-cube to erase colonial traits (decolonisation)

Behind the transformation of Musée Guimet was the development of academic subjects as anthropology, archaeology and especially art history. Institutionalisation played a decisive role in categorising into particular disciplines the objects of similar cultural contexts.

Following the expansion of European colonialism, scholarly interests on the *Other* became profuse as reflected by the early publication *Primitive Culture: Researches into The Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom* (Tylor 1871), in which the *Other* was regarded as 'primitive', 'savage' and 'lower race'. The scientific knowledge as such had well served

Figure 2. A mis-en-scéne exhibit of the duplicates of Toji mandala in MG in Paris between 1890-1910 (MNAAG).

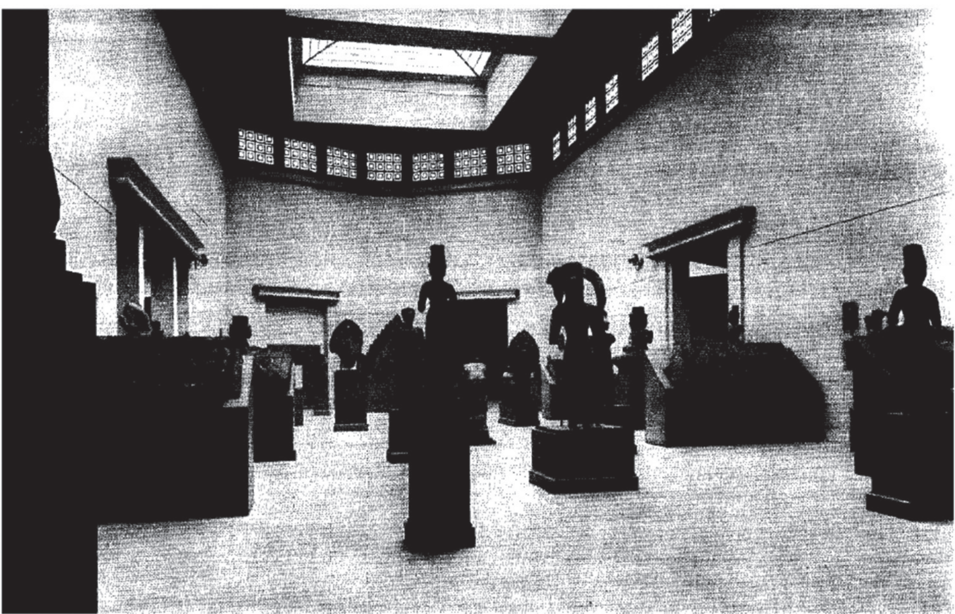

Figure 3. The white-cube of Musée Guimet in 1945 (Stern 1948, 52; © MNAAG).

the colonial governments. For example, the Russian orientalist Sergey Oldenburg (1863–1934), while gathering prestigious ethnographic collections founded the Commission for the Study of the Tribal Composition of the Population of the Borderlands of Russia to administer the indigenous small-numbered peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. It is this need that had encouraged the systematical study of the exotic objects from the princely 'cabinet of curiosities' to the learned

Figure 4. The white-cube of MG in 2001 (MNAAG).

societies and modern museums. Within the walls of varied knowledge institutions, the studies diverged and specialised into specific subject matters, as seen in the fact that the Royal Anthropological Institute was founded in 1867, the Royal Archaeological Institute in 1844 and the French Institute for Oriental Archaeology in 1880. In MG, simply between 1893 and 1904, a total of 180 conferences or seminars was convened to explore the history of religions (Héron 2001, 94). At the same time, the modern concept of art has taken shape. The creation of the Royal Society of Arts in 1754 marked the milestone for new ways of producing and consuming art, in response to an enlarging anonymous art market emerged for the increasing middle class of a commercial society. Art history, pioneered by Winckelmann (1717–1768), was formed by connecting historical texts and ancient Greek or Roman ruins to discussing the changing styles and national characteristics of artmaking (Kaufmann 2001). This knowledge became a backbone for categorising and classifying the colossal colonial collections from/of the *Other*, and the level of skill or technique, aesthetic sensibility and artistic feature became the criteria of ranking – a concept and mechanism often entailing a price tag. This is the unspoken side of 'elevating' ethnographic specimen or archaeological artefacts into art by museums. Although such principle of ranking was challenged in the discussions of 'decolonising art history' by non-Western cultural objects (of their systems of knowledge, methodology and value), the concept of Wittgenstein 'family resemblance' was suggested as a solution (Corbey, Layton, and Tanner 2008). Nevertheless, based on art history rather than ethnology, MG was spared from the said self-criticism of anthropological thinking in the post-colonial era. Eventually, art as a subject is in the knowledge category of philosophy, a transcending matter beyond any boundary of time, space and culture. One prototype for MG is Louvre, of which the royal collections after the Revolution has been displayed by the National Assembly to the common public in a systematic and chronological way, free from any significance of religion, monarchy or feudality, to demonstrate not as the aristocratic taste but as the national art belonging to all citizens.

Presenting self

The colonial understanding

In the countries of origin of MG's collections, not only the contents but also the locations of those national museums have landmarked Western colonisation. For example, cities like Calcutta (Kolkata), Batavia (Jakarta) or Hanoi were the administrative centres of colonial empires, built along the shore, convenient for shipping and transportation to the metropoles. Calcutta was the capital of British Raj (firstly known to the British East India Company in the 1690s) between 1858 and 1911 and was replaced by New Delhi as the Partition of Bengal (1905–1911) failed to segregate the Muslims from the Hindus. Consequently, it is the Indian Museum in Calcutta that holds the most complete collections of local cultures. Its 35 galleries contained the gatherings of art, archaeology, anthropology, geology, zoology and botany made by the founder-curator Nathaniel Wallich (1786–1854). A similar story exists in Indonesia. Located in Batavia, the capital of the Dutch East Indies, the museum's 141,000 objects have covered the themes of archaeology, history, ethnography, natural history and geography – a complete guide for the Dutch Empire to comprehend their subjects of the colony. Such knowledge made by the colonisers became the self-understanding of the colonised after decolonisation.

Identical curatorship and muséographie

In addition to the knowledge system, the museum presentation of local cultures configured by management, curatorship and muséographie embodied in the white-cube has remained identical to the colonial model and proliferated. The National Museum (New Delhi) built-in 1949 modelled the Indian Museum in Calcutta with a focus in art. In Sri Lanka, the Colombo Museum was enlarged by creating branches in Jaffna, Kandy and Ratnapura based on the research of the Royal Asiatic Society. In Indonesia, the National Museum redistributed manuscripts to the National Library and artworks to the National Gallery, and had a museum boom in the 1980s. While the National Museum of Vietnamese History (based on the archaeological collection of the *École francaise d'Extrême-Orient*) after 1958 has expanded with an added chapter on the August 1945 Revolution, the Vietnam National Fine Arts Museum built-in 1966 was dedicated to telling the country's defence with exhibition themes of martyrdom, patriotism, military strategy and overcoming enemy incursion (Lenzi 2004) Figure 5. In these museums, despite adding a new episode portraying the colonial empires as evil or cruel, the rest has kept intact. Going into these museums, one will be reminded of their prototypes in the West. While continuing to collect, interpret and disseminate local heritage cultures the same way as MG did (and does), they carried out the said knowledge transfer – the *Other* in the West has become the *Self* in Asia – manifested in the white-cube. This creates a paradox or conflict between the museum narratives and the living traditions (of local peoples), especially in terms of religions. In India, over 80% of the population is Hinduist. In Sri Lanka 70.2%, Myanmar 88%, Thailand 93%, Cambodia 97.9%, Laos 65%, Vietnam 85%, Japan 69.8% – and France 0.5% – are Buddhist (Iwai 2017). These statistics raise a question: how should local peoples understand the messages fabricated and delivered within-and-without the white-cube? Seeing their deities as a symbol of philosophical thinking, ethnographic specimen or fine art in Orientalism or exoticism and learning the history of religions or art as in the West? While these religious icons are not yet history, extinguished from their daily life, but the sacred and holy material mediators still conveying to the believers the original norms and value of traditional cultures. Putting these religious objects in the museum (a secular space for art and science) instead of the temple, in a way, is to deprive their cultural rights to practice their faiths.

White-cube to secularise local beliefs (colonisation/coloniality)

Although the reason for the countries of origin to continue the colonial legacy of the museum is considered as to 'demonstrate their respect for Western values and their worthiness as recipients of

Figure 5. Vietnam National Museum of Fine Art, in which local religious (Buddhist) artefacts are displayed as artworks in the white-cube to tell the national history (Wiki Commons).

Western military and economic aids' (Duncan 1995), when UNSECO proclaim that 'it is exactly these places that have the greatest difficulties and the most original museum experiences' (Baghli, Boylan, and Herreman 1998, 7); one important yet often neglected factor are that – museum represents sociocultural modernity pursued by the independent governments, especially during and in the aftermath of wars (Belting 2007). Being caught in the dilemma between modernisation and tradition, the religious artefacts in the white-cube like said provoke the biggest challenge. Not only their religious meaning and function are cancelled by the secular museum space but also their believer-visitors restrained to hold rituals or ceremonies.

A set of 21 mandala sculptures of Esoteric (Mantrayana) Buddhism at the temple Toji in Kyoto serves as an explicit example of how such objects can have different meanings given in different places by different peoples. The original statues, created in the 9th century, were believed to be designed by the monk Kukai, who went to China studying the language and culture and brought back the Esoteric Buddhism from the Huiguo Temple in Chang'an (Xian). After the Meji Reform, religions in Japan went through a modernisation as seen in the heritage process of Buddhist temples (including the artefacts) and the establishment of modern museums. Opening to the public, said 21 statues of Toji Figure 6 has remained as inapproachable 'gods'. Their impressive size and beauty had attracted a great interest of Émile Guimet. Incapable of acquiring the originals, he commissioned a reproduction with smaller sizes from a local craftsman and exhibited the shipped works at the *Exposition Universelle* in 1878 and in his museum of religion Figure 2. However, like mentioned, is regarded as a scientific specimen with aesthetic flaws, they were removed to the storage in the 1930s when the museum was restructured. They were not to see the daylight until 1991 when the Buddhist Pantheon was established in an annexe building of MG. A comparison between Figures 2, 6 and 7 reveals the difference between the mandala statues' meaning-making in the original temple, the museum of religions and the museum of art and how the white-cube 'elevates' or 'diminishes' their value. According to the phenomenology of architecture, the space created inside a Buddhist temple (similar to church or cathedral) – tall ceiling, oversized statue put in high position – contributes to

Figure 6. Part of the original 21 mandala statues at the Toji temple in Kyoto (Wiki commons).

forming a feeling of serenity or sacredness and generating a sense of awe from the worshipers. However, the secular museum space of white-cube to mediate science and art is designed to be visitor-friendly above all. As seen in Figure 6, visitors in Toji wooden temple are fenced away from the deities in a position high above behind a table to receive offerings as water, incense and flowers.[3] The spotlights projected from the platform are compromised for tourists to appreciate the 'art' while not obstructing the practice of believers. However, in the special exhibition of MG Figure 7, the audiences are encouraged to approach the objects set to be at eye level to invite a close 'read' under the spotlights from the ceiling. Except for a darker wall colour, it is a typical white-cube, as seen also in the Kyoto National Museum (in the region of the objects' provenance) where the deities have come down to their audiences as art.

Conclusion and discussion

Museum is the medium is the message

The case study of Musée Guimet and its peers in Asia as reported has outlined a heritage landscape of coloniality, which further explains why it did not affect much to the 'countries of origin' the self-criticism of anthropological thinking in the postcolonial era (Clifford 1988) entailing the name change of Western museums or exhibitions from 'ethnology' to 'world cultures (or civilisations)' – although this resonates a familiar tone to the evolvement of MG from 'religions' to 'art' (and 'knowledge'). In the museum world as such, it seems that decolonisation (meaning returning the occupied land or property or gaining sovereignty and independency) is treated subtly through 'discourse' – how to call the name and see the object – in instead of repatriation. The muséographie of white-cube performs a conceptual or ideological decolonisation in the West by washing away the colonial traces and making the objects in display 'abstract, vibrant and free of historicity' to replace the often racist or biased view of ethnographic exhibitions (Conklin 2013) by the transcultural

Figure 7. The duplicates of the 21 mandala statues in a special exhibition in 2019 at MG in Paris (MNAAG). Note, in the temple (Figure 6) visitors are fenced away and looking upwards to the objects in display, yet in the museum (Figure 7) they can approach the objects in display easily and have a close 'read' at around the eye level.

aesthetic sensibility of art exhibitions. However, in the countries of origin, it represents a cultural colonisation as it retains, endorses and continues the colonial identification, categorising and interpretation of local cultures and traditions. The museum effect being maximised and amplified by white-cube, while works to 'elevate' ethnographic specimen into art also 'diminishes' religious objects into art or historical artefacts arbitrarily. Besides, the social functions of the museum are to civilise and educate the citizens. This notion resonates with Emile Guimet's idea to provide a way (exhibiting philosophies) for the blue-collar workers to be happy. It is in this light that the globalisation of museum praxis and heritage enterprise is taken as a 'civilising mission' (Falser 2011). Nevertheless, this view unwelcomingly echoes with the outdated imperialist idea, as described by Verges (Verges 2014) that it was the (French) Republican duty to 'colonise, educate and guide' the *Other*, equivalent to the 'primitive, savage and lower races'.

Decoloniality and museum praxis

As globalisation has gathered paces, the debate over repatriation between universal museums and the countries of origin became heated. But what does it signify to change the exhibition milieu of the important collections in question from one white-cube to another? Considering the phenomenon of museum coloniality, repatriation seems to be a power struggle of (inter-) national politics and economics rather than recovering the cultural rights (or identities) of local peoples. It prompts new 'heritage game' (Peacock and Rizzo 2008) and has less to do with preserving the living religious traditions – the core part of a culture. While the discussion of 'decolonising museum' or 'decolonising cultural heritage' is emerging, covering the topics of the curatorial process, exhibition narrative, museum history or design (Preciado 2014; Petršin-Bachelez 2015; Tlostanova 2017), the fundamental paradox between museum and temple (between science and religion) in Asia (or the non-Western worlds) remains to be unnegotiable still. However, similar a museum can be to a shrine or altar

(Roberts 2017) or church, it is dedicated to secular scientific knowledge with a specific mission, etiquette and code of ethics. *De facto*, the museum is not temple or church by nature, and it cannot (yet?) Close the doors upon reservation for believers to hold authentic rituals or ceremonies as seen in some cathedrals in France or Italy (or temples in Japan).

Besides, it is noticed that the social value of non-Western cultural heritage is often ignored or diminished as 'authenticity' by those international conventions or charters, born out of a disenchanted worldview, and evolved from the Protestant Reformation towards nationalism and secularism. Such a 19th century doctrine ensconces all societies at various stages along a ladder leading to modern civilisation represented by North-Western Europe (Byrne 2014). This observation is germane to the postcolonialism of entangled history (Bauck and Maier 2013), yet little reflected in museum studies. While colonialism needs to be re-examined (Eckert 2016), the phenomenon of museum coloniality deserves more understanding. In addition, the findings of this research contribute to challenging the legitimacy of white-cube, especially in terms of the religious objects of the *Other* that are still 'alive' in local cultures. As Byrne suggested, modernity should differ from place to place, and the inadequacy should be reconsidered of those charters composed with presumptuous and naïve terms at the (inter-)national level for rich research data of history and anthropology that detail the complex reality of people's interaction with heritage was not consulted or referenced (Byrne 2014). What can be the alternative? How to delink or decoloniality in the museum? To bridge the gaps between museum and temple (as knowledge and religious institution)?

Signs are shown for a possible change as 1) the white-cube aesthetics are being challenged by contemporary art critique (Birkett 2012), 2) experimental exhibition design applied in museums to simulate a temple-like atmosphere, and 3) limited religious practices allowed in heritage destination (for example, Angkor Wat) and local museum (as in the National Museum of Cambodia). Whereas Byrne exploits the posthumanism prevailed in digital humanities for a philosophical reconciliation between the scientific heritage process and 'the belief in the supernatural' (Byrne 2019), it is worth further contemplating how to carry out the idea of 'religious diversity' or 'religious pluralism' within-and-without the white-cube of the museum (other than the need to revise the standard definition of 'museum') (Raposo 2019) – which may be indispensable should cultural diversity play an essential role for better heritage futures.

Notes

1. In English: There is nothing outside the text.
2. In English: if I was into philosophy, if I founded the Museum of Religions, it was to give the workers the means to be happy. To achieve this result, I consulted the history of civilisations. I researched in all countries, those men who had wanted to make others happy, and I found that they were all the founders of religions.
3. The table for offering is not clear in the Fig 6, but can be seen in other photos and has been spotted by the author during a field trip made on the 5 September 2019.

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V

FASHIONING CHINESE FEMINISM: REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN THE ART HISTORY OF MODERN CHINA

by

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Fashioning Chinese feminism: Representations of women in the art history of modern China

Keywords: Geisha, Poster-Calendar Girls, Uniform Aesthetics, Chinese Female Artists, Chinese Feminism, Modernity in China

Abstract

Artworks record history. The images of women's fashion and beauty presented in the art history of modern China illustrate explicitly the challenging, changing and circuitous development of women's rights and feminism in the country. In this study, I analyse and contextualize the most widespread representations of Chinese 'modern women's fashion': (1) the geisha-like ladies of news illustrations before the 1911 Revolution, (2) the poster-calendar girls in the republican aesthetics of an early commercial society, (3) the papercutting folk art that profiles 'half the sky' in the uniform aesthetics of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist propaganda, (4) the gender-specific art themes and materials applied by female artists after the opening-up policy and (5) the feminist art in the Chinese contemporary art world. The resulting analysis helps to elucidate the interconnections among fashion, art and women's status in China, in pursuit of modernity, the radical expansion of Western colonisation, domestic political turmoil and, in particular, longstanding patriarchal cultural norms and values.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the twentieth century representations of women in Chinese art have articulated a complex array of issues related to colonialism, modernisation, political ideology,

women's rights and industrialisation. In this article, I discuss the ways in which these artistic depictions have paralleled changes in women's fashion, as well as shifting politics interlinked with complex nationalist and communist agendas throughout the twentieth century. As conventional understandings of the self, subject and society are shown to be inadequate when examining the interconnections of cultural and transnational economic systems of production and consumption that have a profound effect on human choices, including fashion (Brydon and Niessen 1998), I use visual analysis, in addition to historical methods, with a focus on women's fashion to examine the subtle relationship among art, politics and women's rights in modern China. As Antonia Finnane (2007) points out, the Chinese people have worn their nation on their backs since the period of the 1911 Revolution. Juanjuan Wu (2009) argues that under the rule of Mao the 'changes in women's fashion reflected the circuitous course of women's liberation' (31). These changes have resulted in ambiguous representations that reflected anxieties about Chinese identity in general (xiv), tempered with dramatically different ideas about the various and interrelated hierarchies associated with class and gender. In fact, China's traditional cultural system, while in continuous conversation with its modern phases, has emphasized hierarchical relations within the family, society and statehood, including the 'subservience of women to men' (Wu 2009: 29). These hierarchical relations have been in tension with politically changing desires for social reforms and development. In this article, I am specifically interested in the connections between Chinese art and fashion in relation to various cultural tensions and political agendas and, in particular, with the question of who is being represented and who is creating the representations of women.

The 'Second Sex' in Chinese Contemporary Art

Anyone familiar with the 798 Contemporary Art District in Beijing has probably noticed the weak presence of women artists and their art. An informal observation would further reveal a few interesting facts. Most gallery staff are women and many of them have artist boyfriends or

husbands. Most art students are women, but those who occupy the power lists in the art field are normally men. Most women artists do not want to be mentioned as female artists, much less as feminist artists. These observations indicate a gender issue in the twenty-first century Chinese art world, where women artists are few and far between. Rather, women are the objects of art to be gazed at, adored and portrayed by men artists and patrons. In the early history of Chinese contemporary art, almost every avant-garde art theory and movement of the West have been feverishly experimented with—except feminist art. In the *Exhibition of Chinese Modern Art* at the National Art Museum of China in 1989, which marked the conclusion of the golden decade for the development of Chinese contemporary art (Gao 1999), feminist art was completely absent. It was not until after the turn of the millennium that a curatorial interest in the topic emerged, thanks to the thriving market of Chinese contemporary art. Given that contemporary art is supposed to be the most avant-garde cultural sphere, it is not difficult to speculate how challenging the development of women's rights and feminism in the society at large has been. If women are really 'half the sky' like Mao declared (Mao 1964), why then are women in contemporary China still 'the second sex', as Simone de Beauvoir (1949) famously argued in post-War France?

Most discussions of gender equality, women's rights or feminism in China came from sociology and literary criticism after 1995, when the UN's *World Conference on Women* was hosted by the Chinese government in Beijing as a political gesture to reconcile with the West after the Tiananmen Square protests (Fincher 2018). In Western art studies, Griselda Pollock (1988) concludes that art history is written by men. Amidst the sociological and literary discourses and in Chinese art studies, the connections among women's rights, fashion and art remain little explored. To bridge this knowledge gap, I focus on the depiction of clothes in women's art images in this article to sketch an outline of women's fashion representations in the art history of modern China. As fashion engages with politics (Vargas 2009; Cunningham 2003), social class (Crane 2000) and feminism (Sternadori and Hagseth 2014; Strassel 2013; Paoletti 2015) in the West, it is legitimate to

consider it a prominent indicator of Chinese feminism. In the light of entangled history, fashion in China also serves as a contact zone, a frontline, between Western and Chinese traditional ideals in the pursuit of modernity. Additionally, clothes are a medium of communication. The textile layer(s) right next to the skin embody a milieu of contested ideologies, where various social and cultural norms and values are negotiated and compromised. This layer in between the inner self and outer world represents and performs human identity (Watson 2004; Paulicelli and Clark 2009). As Quentin Bell writes, fabric is 'a natural extension of the body, or even the soul' (Bell 1976: 9). Fashion theory will thus be the conceptual tool for my study as I seek to trace and interpret changes in artistic representations of modern Chinese women through fashion.

The study materials for my research include selected visuals of widespread representations of women in the art history of modern China. During the first half of the twentieth century, newspapers and poster-calendars formed leading media in an early market economy distributing the imagery of modern women in fashion. The lithographic pictorials of the earliest Chinese newspaper and the most popular graphic images of poster-calendars are therefore chosen for this study. Under the rule of Mao from 1949 to 1976, propaganda art became pervasive and exclusive, as embodied in the most popular Chinese folk art: papercutting. In the post-socialist era, from the early 1980s onwards, following the thriving development of Chinese contemporary art that often occupied the newspaper headlines, women-specific art themes and motifs began to appear in public, and feminist art emerged. The art and life of Chinese contemporary female artists are thus included in the discussion. Using these materials to explore women's status in the fashion and art of modern China, it is worth noting that they are chosen from not only women artists but also men, especially in the early days, because professional women artists did not exist in China before the 1920s, while feminist art did not emerge until the twenty-first century. By observing these representations of women in the art history of modern China, I reveal the relationships among fashion, art and Chinese feminism, and show how images of modern women in China have been shaped by changing social,

political and economic paradigms, as well as cultural and artistic norms. I argue that the evolution of women's fashion in art mirrors that of women's rights in a non-Western country like China, which had the urge to modernize itself in the face of Western imperialism and then globalization.

The socio-political background behind the pictures

In China, the emancipation of women in the late nineteenth-century was led by men: male literati such as Liang Qichao (1873-1929) and Kim Tienhe (1873-1947), who sought to pursue modernization and to save the country from the radical colonial expansion of the West. This is in contrast to the late eighteenth-century feminist movements in Europe led by women: in France by Olympe de Gouges and in England by Mary Wollstonecraft. In the eyes of these Chinese male progressive thinkers, women had been subjected to an obsolete feudalist tradition and hence had come into focus in the Hundred Days' Reform in 1895. Although the reform failed, the idea of modernization became widespread and women continued as a priority for such undertakings (Xia 2015), especially when more labour was needed for the republican revolution (Tiesheng 2014). This political movement promised to free women from violence, slavery and discrimination and to give them rights to education, property and politics. After the 1911 Revolution, most promises were fulfilled, except that of voting. In 1912, the article of gender equality in voting was withdrawn from *The Guidelines for the Provisional Constitution* of the Chinese United League (the predecessor of the republican government).

Whereas the Nationalist Party discouraged women from participating in politics, the Communist Party strived for the opposite. Founded in 1922, the Chinese Communist Party established a special 'women's department' for recruiting female comrades. The only woman in the Central Committee, Hiang Chingyu, one of Mao's fellow student-activists from Hunan province, was placed in charge. The *Manifesto of the Second Congress of Chinese Communist Party* promised women equal voting rights alongside workers and peasants, protection in the labour market together with children and the eradication of all legislation restricting their rights (Johnson 1983). However,

the Nationalist Party defeated Mao at the end of the 1920s. As he retreated to the countryside, this 'setback' enabled the Communist Party a chance to earn its first extended experience of governing and reorganizing rural society. The result was a central policy to improve the social status of women and to activate them for the war effort and the nation's economy. To further mobilize and empower women for class warfare, a full-scale strategy on the pretext of women's rights was launched by the *Fourth National Congress* in 1931: (1) to liberate the female feudalist-bourgeoisie, (2) to convert the female Christian-comprador, (3) to persuade the female middle-class, especially students and (4) to lead female peasant-labourers (Guang 2015). After the 1949 Revolution, the party-state carried out a series of women's rights related socialist reforms on land use, family organization and marriage law. According to Mao, it was not men but feudalism and capitalism that oppressed women; what women needed to do was just to fight like men (Li 2003). Despite the fact that women's rights and gender equality were to be emphasized due to the collectivization and mobilization required by the Party, feminism was regarded as a dangerous idea because of its presumed association with the bourgeois ideology of the West. In the realm of fashion, gender became largely neutralized in favour of Communist dress that represented a 'classless' society, like the 'Mao suit' inspired by militaristic Communist fashion from the USSR.

After Deng Xiaoping came into power in 1978 and fostered an opening-up policy, China entered into a new phase known as post-socialism, post-Mao or 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' and state capitalism. Chinese women, too, entered a new phase. As mentioned earlier, the UN's *World Conference on Women* was held in Beijing in 1995. It provided a beginning for the growth of Chinese feminism, while reflecting on women's rights and gender equality in general. Not only scholarly discussions (Barlow 2004; Angeloff and Lieber 2012) but also social projects for women began to emerge (Platiner 1995). The governmental organisation, the All-China Democratic Women's Foundation, founded in 1949, became an NGO and was renamed the All-China Women's Federation. Foreign NGOs were given special permission by the Chinese

government to operate inside the country. Most of these NGOs pursued the mission of the International Council of Women (first assembled in Washington DC in 1888) to gain political rights and property rights, as well as to address inequitable inheritance laws and limited parental rights. Local NGOs, while tackling domestic violence and inclusive education, also engaged in social activism and the discourse on universal norms and value concerning human rights (Milwertz and Bu 2007). After this short introduction to the social-political background in China, I will now move to women artists in China.

Women, Their Art and the 'First Sex'

Before the twentieth century the only way for women's art to survive in China was through their male family members in power. For example, the landscape and garden paintings of Chen Shu (1660–1735) were collected by the Emperor Qianlong upon the recommendation of her son, a prominent statesman who served in the court (Tsang 2006). The still life on ink and silk paper of Wen Chu (1595–1634) was mentioned in the *Recordings of The Dynasty's Painting*, a classic art critique of Chinese paintings written by Chang Gen, because she was the direct descendent of Wen Zhengming (1470–1559), one of the Four Masters of Ming painting. The calligraphy and bamboo paintings of Guan Daosheng (1262–1319) were known only because her husband Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322) was a royal family member and a scholar, painter and calligrapher in the Song dynasty. Among the massive amount of artworks in the royal art collection of the Qing dynasty, only a few hundred were made by women (Li 2013).

Things began to change in the 1920s, when the education system was modernized, and a market economy began to take shape. Art academies in the Western style were established in Shanghai in 1912, in Beijing in 1918, in Wuchang in 1920, in Suzhou in 1922 and in Hangzhou in 1928 (Zheng 2007). It was also a time when the political divide between the nationalist and the communist parties started to show in art. Two of the most known first-generation professional Chinese female artists, He Xiangning (1878–1972) and Pan Yuliang (1895–1977), provide a typical

example. Born into a wealthy family in Hong Kong, He Xiangning joined the Communist Party and assumed a high-ranking position after 1949; she was known for her traditional Chinese paintings. In contrast, Pan Yuliang was one of the first Chinese female artists to paint in the Western style. She was a geisha-like lady who was sold by her uncle at the age of thirteen after her parents died. She then married her client Pan Zanhua (1885–1959) at the age of seventeen as a 'concubine' – a legitimate spouse, ranked below 'wife' by the marital law (Goodman 2020). Starting to learn how to paint in 1917, Pan entered the Shanghai Fine Art Academy in 1920 and went to the Beaux-arts de Lyon in 1921 and the Beaux-arts de Paris and the Accademia di Belle Arti di Roma in 1926. In 1929, she participated in China's very first art exhibition in Shanghai. While her female colleagues presented Chinese paintings in the traditional style on ink and paper with conventional art themes and motifs like flowers, birds or landscapes, she demonstrated her oil paintings of female nudity – an art theme commonly seen in the Western art but rarely in Chinese art (except in Chun-Gong-Hua, an educative illustration of sexual intercourse for newlyweds) – and received severe criticism from the authorities and the public. Becoming an expatriate in Paris for life, she never returned to China, and her art became much appreciated in Taiwan under the rule of the Nationalist Party.

In retrospect, Pan Yuliang's decision proved correct, as freedom in art did not thrive for either men or women artists under Mao's rule. Making propaganda art seemed to be the only way to continue an art career. Between 1949 and 1978, as fashions for 'half the sky' were reduced to a uniform aesthetic, all features of the female body disappeared from the visual culture of popular and fine art in China. In the permanent collection of National Art Museum of China in Beijing, all of the oil paintings made between 1949 and 1978 were propaganda art, in which women were depicted either in military uniforms or in men's dungarees working in factories or harvesting in fisheries and fields. The very few oil paintings featuring female nudity were made either before 1949 or after 1978, primarily by men. During these three decades, not a single solo exhibition of Chinese female artists was held in the entire country (Tao 2009). This suggests that women were still oppressed, if

not so much by the patriarchal tradition than by communist ideology: it was 'patriarchal wine poured from a socialist bottle' (Chen 1994).

In the post-socialist era, together with the thriving contemporary art and market economics in China, women artists acquired a new chance to freely define the image or imagery of modern women, first with women-specific art themes or materials and then with feminist art per se. However, the journey to a mature development for Chinese feminism and feminist art has been, and still seems, long. One significant indicator is the opinion of Ai Weiwei (1957-), the world's most-known Chinese dissident, contemporary artist and human rights activist. In 2008, in an interview by a journalist from a local magazine, he was asked: 'Why do the careers of female Chinese contemporary artists often appear to be unstable or interrupted, like that of your wife?' (Agnes 2008). He began his answer by saying that what he appreciated the most in a woman was for her to be like a 'cat': quiet, independent and mysterious. He explained further:

> First of all, life does not exist for the making of art. We live according to many different circumstances and values, not just one. It is unnecessary to ask such a question. If the chances are bigger for the female artists to stop creating art than for the male artists, I think it is because women are luckier. They trust more in their own bodies and emotions, as well as in the implications life brings to them at different times. But men are rather clueless, like a wandering dog having difficulties to find a home.

He continued by saying 'it would be ideal if women do not need to pay too high a price for making a living' and 'it is better for women to stay relaxed and distant from society'. These words sound rather traditional instead of avant-garde, and against rather than for women's rights. Apparently Ai Weiwei has not understood that, as UNESCO tells us, women's rights are human rights. It is

curious why his opinion on women and their art does not synchronize with the images of women in his art, which are often bold, rebellious and daring to challenge authority and tradition.

I will come back to Ai's views of women artists later in the next section, where I shift to focus more specifically on cultural representations of women's fashions in the twentieth century, as depicted in widely circulated art.

Fashioning modernity in the twentieth century

1) Unwearable Westernization in the late Qing period

The radical expansion of European colonization brought overwhelming challenges to most Asian cultures and resulted in their modernisation, which was a sociocultural transformation often led by the colonial government and continued by local polities. Being one of the few countries able to retain political sovereignty, China began modernization on its own initiative: starting from technology and then expanding to the political system and eventually reaching the arts and culture of people's everyday lives. This selective and progressive process is recorded in the art history of modern China. Newspaper illustrations were among the most important visual witnesses that marked the beginning of such a process. Wu Youru (1840–1893) was the leading illustrator for *Pictorial of Dianshizhai* (1884–1898), a weekly illustrated supplement to the very first Chinese newspaper, *Shen Bao*, published by the British businessman Ernest Major in 1872 in Shanghai. Major adopted the business model of mass media like *Le Petit Journal* in France and *Die Dame* in Germany. After leaving *Shen Bao*, illustrator Wu established his own publishing house and published *Pictorial of Feiyinge* (Theobald 2012) alongside book illustrations, including one of the most important Chinese classic novels of the late Qing period, *Shanghai Flowers*, which depicted a peculiar culture of geisha-like ladies in the social conventions in the Sinosphere.

Insert Fig 1 appr. here

Caption: Wu Youru, *Exotic Taste*, 1900s. Lithography (Print). 45.6 cm x 55 cm. Shanghai History Museum, Shanghai. Wiki Commons.

Figure 1, entitled *Exotic Taste*, is a typical work of Wu Youru. Trained in traditional Chinese painting, he mastered lithography; an art technique imported to China for the original purpose of printing Bibles (Zhu 2012). To make news illustrations, he often picked the strange, exotic and 'modern' (Western) as subject matter. *Exotic Taste* shows a group of ladies is enjoying a luxurious dinner in the Western style; a fashionable leisure practice at that time in big cities such as Shanghai or Guangzhou in the coastal areas of the foreign concession. In the picture, it is obvious that the interior of the dining room is decorated in a European style, comprising a fireplace, an electric pendant lamp, a mechanical clock, a long oval-shaped dining table, furniture, tableware, wine glasses and forks and knives. The only element of Chinese-ness is the fashion those ladies were depicted as wearing, including the traditional Qipao dress, the *eupdo* or bun hairdo and small bound feet. This image resonates with contemporary fashion photos that present fashionable images of women in 'out of places' settings (Bernstein and Kaiser 2013: 28).

It is worth noting that the women portrayed in these kinds of pictures are usually categorized as 'prostitutes' by Western scholars (Henriot 1997; Hershatter 1997) and 'courtesans' by Chinese scholars (Yeh 2006). In fact, they are similar to the so-called *geisha* in Japan. Their existence in a way embodied a longstanding entertaining culture in the patriarchal societies in the Sinosphere, where young girls of talents born into lower social classes would risk being sold to a cabaret-brothel establishment. After receiving trainings in the performing arts (music, dancing or singing), visual arts (Chinese painting or calligraphy) or literature (reciting and writing poetry), they could begin their business to entertain clients, usually men in power. Before the 1911 Revolution, these women were registered to the lowest social class, 'the untouchables', in the official civil registry system.

One common way to elevate their status into the ordinary class of 'good citizens', was to be redeemed by and wedded to one of their clients and became his 'concubine'. In general, their entertaining enterprise was under the protection and supervision of government authorities. For example, the pricelist to visit them or take them out was regulated and was determined by the level of their beauty and art, which was all evaluated, ranked and certified by the government (Zu 2011). In a patriarchal tradition where ordinary women were expected to stay home and maintain good virtue by managing domestic life, these geisha-like ladies became some of the first 'career women' in China to promote to strange, exotic and modern (Western) things. Wu Youru's illustrations show women dining in Western style, riding four-wheeled carriages in the European style, playing imported games like billiards and trying cutting-edge devices such as the telescope (*Lithographs of Wu Youru* 1998). These pictures delivered the image of 'modern women', which symbolized the level of modernization back then: somewhat superficial and distant from people's everyday lives and remaining to be tasted and tried only on special occasions.

2) Skin-deep modernisation in republican China

After the 1911 Revolution that overthrew the Qing dynasty and installed the Republic of China, women's rights and gender equality began to improve. Since then it became possible for women to be independent and work as teachers, writers, painters, singers, dancers, opera actresses or movie stars (Yeh 2006). Under the rule of the Nationalist Party a commercial society of market economics started to take shape. The curated fashion looks of 'modern' women became largely used on a new type of media: a poster-calendar advertisement for mass-produced consumer goods. This fusion of media comprising images of beautiful women originated from the genre art of *nian-hua* ('new year picture'), traditionally made to decorate the festive season of the Chinese New Year. The aforementioned *Shen Bao* was a pioneer. In 1883, it published the very first poster-calendar in China with its logo printed on top and distributed free copies to its clients as a new year's gift. This

marketing practice was quickly picked up by other businesses, especially manufacturers and retailers of consumer products, including stockings, soap, cosmetics, medicine and especially cigarettes. The pictures created for it formed a specific art category, known as *yue-fen-pai* ('calendar-poster'). And those female models became the earliest poster-calendar girls in China, regarded as fashion icons, appealing symbols of 'modernity' to their Chinese audience.

Insert Fig 2 appr. here.

Caption: A calendar-poster picture commissioned by the Sincere Cosmetics Ltd. in the 1930s. Print. Provenance Unknown.

One of the leading graphic artists of *yue-fen-pai* was Zheng Mantuo (1888-1961). Like Wu Youru, he was trained in traditional Chinese painting. To make his graphics for the commercial advertisements of poster-calendars, he invented a new technique that mixed methods from traditional Chinese and Western practices (Wu 2006; Sheng 2019). The models who posed for him were no longer geisha-like ladies, but rather 'modern' women of rather diverse backgrounds. In addition to movie stars, singers or dancers, there were also well-known female socialites from the upper social class demonstrating the latest fashions and designs imported from the West. Instead of dressing up in the traditional style like in Wu's illustrations, they were open to the newest Western fashions from head to toe, including their hairstyles, clothing, stockings, shoes and cosmetics. Figure 2 presents a typical *yue-fen-pai* painting in which the model wears a woollen coat and a pair of leather high-heels while sporting a neatly permed short hairstyle. This was a modern style that could be seen almost exclusively in metropolitan cities of the foreign concession, for example in Shanghai or Guangzhou. The only feature of Chinese-ness in the picture was the Qipao dress. Yet this too was modernized, as can be seen in the blending of traditional features (silky textile, embroidery, short unfolded stand-up collar with frog fasteners) with new elements (shorter and

split-skirt hemlines). Such a style became the so-called 'republican aesthetics' (Peng 2020) of popular women's fashion, prominent especially in the period from the 1920s to the 1940s in mainland China under the rule of the Nationalist Party, composed of a hybrid style of the Chinese (traditional) and the Western (modern). It is worth noting that this new Qipao, called 'Cheongsam' in Cantonese, became a symbol of identity especially for those Chinese female emigrants who fled the country after 1949 to Hong Kong, Taiwan and the West (Sim 2019).

As the visual elements of the picture indicate, modernity at that time began to take a hybrid form in local society, just like the hybrid form of modern Qipao (Clark 2000). This fruitful creativity in arts and design was rooted in the collision of Western culture and local traditions growing in the rich soil of market economics. Apparently, the level of modernization, or Westernization, in republican China had crept onto people's skin – literally and metaphorically – and thus into the private realm of people's everyday lives.

3) Revolutionary body under the rule of Mao

Following the success of the 1949 Revolution, republican aesthetics were replaced by uniform aesthetics (Finnane 2007), promoted by the Communist Party since the 1920s. Instead of showing their beautiful silhouettes with Qipao, women in mainland China began to wear *brage*, a one-piece simple style of dress introduced from the USSR (Lim 2016), as well as military uniform and factory dungarees (Kong 2008). The asexual uniformity of 'correct' fashions commanded by the Party prevailed, in spite of personal efforts to retain a nuanced and discreet sense of fashion (especially during the Cultural Revolution), as in the differences in buttons, trims and under shirts with patterned fabrics or fake collars or collar linings of the outer garment (Wu 2009, 4-5).

Insert Fig 3 appr. here

Caption: Traditional papercutting appropriated for propaganda art to celebrate Mao's rule. In the caption, it says 'Chairman Mao is the red sun in our heart'. Courtesy the Asia Library of the University of Michigan.

The papercutting in Figure 3 provides a visual example of women's looks during this period. In fact, papercutting is a folk art of longstanding history in the Sinosphere, usually made to decorate for special occasions. The image above not only shows how such a folk art has been appropriated for the propaganda of the Party but also illustrates the 'uniform aesthetic' worn by women, who were regarded as equally 'employable' as their fellow countrymen (Bai and Li 2019). This dress code was achieved or manifested by a series of political slogans, such as 'What men can do, women can do as well', 'Time is different, men and women are equal' and 'Same wages for men and women'. The slogan '[Girls] prefer military uniform to gay dress' literally served as the fashion guide for Chinese women, or 'half the sky', in Mao's words (Mao 1964). In addition to the personal efforts mentioned above in the pursuit of a fashion consciousness, the First Lady Jiang Qing, also known as Madame Mao, had the intention to create a 'national dress' for women. In 1973, she designed and wore a Chinese *brage* while receiving the President of France, George Pompidou. In 1974, it became the uniform for the women athletes who attended the 7th Asian Games in Tehran.

Nevertheless, this attempt failed with the visit of the French fashion tycoon, Pierre Cardin, to China's Great Wall in 1978. As discussed in the following section, there was a shift from a desire for nationalist dress to globalized Western fashion.

4) Avant-garde art and fashion in post-socialist China

In 1978, when Deng declared the opening-up policy that transformed China from an agrarian society to the world's factory and a global industrial powerhouse, Pierre Cardin visited Beijing and

held a Great Wall fashion show that provided an eye-opening experience for the Chinese public. A local newspaper described it as follows:

> On a temporarily built runway, eight French and four Japanese models brought by Pierre Cardin moved their hips with their catwalks accompanied by pop music. These tall beauties wore relaxed facial expressions and clothes with shoulder pads. Such a sharp contrast to the Chinese audience sitting there with their dresses in blue and grey and eyes opened wide. ('Pierre Cardin's great wall show showcases the French brand's bonds with China', 2018)

It did not take long for those who were 'sitting there with their dresses in blue and grey' to embrace the modern fashion from Paris. The same went for young women artists.

Xiao Lu, born in 1962, a female artist who later became a feminist artist in Chinese contemporary art, without being informed of feminism has implied such a fashion change in her debut work *Dialogue*—an installation which has remained one of the most controversial of the show's 297 pieces by 186 artists. She was the one who put an end to the aforementioned *Exhibition of Chinese Modern Art* held in Beijing in 1989. In the exhibition hall, as an improvisation she fired two gunshots at her own work, assisted by another artist, Tang Song, who later became her boyfriend. The police were called and the entire exhibition was shut down immediately. For more than a decade, people thought that *Dialogue* was co-created by the couple as a contemporary artwork that aimed to criticize the political environment of the country. This impression was given by the artist statement made by Tang Song to leading Chinese art editors, curators and critics (Jin 2009), who were all men. The coincidence between the gunshots and the Tiananmen Square protests that occurred later that same year made the installation a legend. It had to wait until 2002, when Xiao Lu (now single) returned to China from Australia and claimed her sole authorship that the story of *Dialogue* was brought to daylight (Zhang 2012). It was never about politics, but

intimate relationships, as she wanted to explore how difficult the communication between lovers could be (Lu 1992). In addition to the artistic theme, the medium she employed for the work shows a certain gender preference. The installation presents a man and a woman talking to each other from two separate telephone booths. The two mannequins she used were wearing the latest Western fashions of the 1980s – big shoulder pads, oversized blazers and a poof skirt – instead of military uniforms or factory dungarees. Xiao Lu's artwork appears to imply that a fashion consciousness was awakening from under the control of the Party's political ideology and reconnected to the Western world.

5) Female artists and feminist art in the twenty-first century

The comeback of Xiao Lu seemed to prelude a new era for Chinese female artists. Together with her peers like Lin Tianmiao (1961–) and Yin Xiuzhen (1963–), they became successful in the booming Chinese contemporary art market. One specific feature of their art was the use of gender-specific textiles. A younger female artist, Yang Feng (1972-2018), focused on women's fashion and the social and environmental issues raised by the fast-growing fashion industry of foreign investments in her hometown in Canton. Yet, while feminist art emerged in the West in the 1960s as an important art movement and theory, it has remained marginal in contemporary China. Except for Xiao Lu, who embraced being a feminist artist, none of the women artists noted here wanted their gender to be mentioned and refuted feminism and feminist art. Such a contradiction was also profiled in the art and commentary of Ai Weiwei as discussed above, and that of his wife Lu Qing (1964-).

Leaving for the United States in the early 1980s, Ai Weiwei and Lu Qing returned to China in the mid-1990s. While Ai became the world's most-known Chinese contemporary artist-dissident, Lu remained discreet and secluded. Both Lu Qing and Ai Weiwei were graduates from the Central Academy of Fine Art in Beijing. But unlike Ai, Lu did not pursue her own art career. By far, the

only artwork of Ai Weiwei's known to the public was the painting *Untitled*, dated 2000, collected by Uli Sigg (the patron of Ai Weiwei) and now at the permanent collection of M+ Museum in Hong Kong. Staying away from the public eye, Lu Qing only showed herself when needed to help her husband. For example, Ai served as a model for Lu's photographic work, *June 1994*. In the picture, she is a female protagonist: a tourist in Tiananmen Square, dressed in a casual fashion popular in the West in the 1990s, and lifting her skirt and showing her underwear under the gaze of Mao. To promote his solo *Sunflower Seeds* at Tate Modern in 2010, she accepted an interview by the Italian fashion magazine *Vogue* and became one of the few Chinese international fashion icons. The magazine editor called her the 'quiet lioness of China' (not a 'cat' as Ai would have preferred) and dressed her in coats by David Koma and Kinder Aggugini, shirt and pants by Boss Black and shoes by Simone Rocha (Tillman 2011). When Ai was detained by the police in 2011 for tax evasion, she showed up in front of the camera to protest, wearing a dark coloured Qipao-style top and a sullen expression (Branigan 2011). Nevertheless, in 2015, when Ai Weiwei left China, it was not Lu Qing waiting at the airport upon his arrival in Germany but his girlfriend and their son (Zand 2015). 'Falling from being an artist to a wife' (Xiao 2005), Lu Qing has disappeared from the public eye ever since.

Fashion, Politics and Women's Rights

As noted earlier, Ai Weiwei's opinions on human rights do not necessarily extend to the rights of women, including Lu Qing. His controversial gender attitudes lead to the conclusion of this study: China's longstanding patriarchal norms and values have persisted to this day, despite the drastic social and political reforms over the century, and play a key role in the weak presence of women and their art as observed in the 798 Contemporary Art District. The struggles of women in the country have been recorded by their images or imageries in art: from the illustrations of geisha-like ladies prompting to modern things, to the poster-calendar girls who were regarded as fashion icons,

to the revolutionary bodies in the uniform aesthetics under the rule of Mao, and gender-specific art themes as well as feminist art in Chinese contemporary art. This development of women's representations in the art history of modern China elucidates the intriguing connections among fashion, art and feminism in a non-Western country like China in pursuit of modernity. It also shows that the power or authorship of women's representations in art that used to be exclusively at the hands of 'the first sex' begins to be taken back by 'the second sex'.

Linda Nochlin (1971) wrote that the reason why there have been no great women artists was not because women by nature lacked talent or an inner space of spirituality; instead, it was due to the social system and education. This critical statement, which came out of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, accurately summarises the case of China art as I have presented in this article. Yet the question remains: in the twenty-first century, are Chinese women artists finally able to define or depict their own imagery, freely and independently? Is it possible that we will soon see a Chinese version of Guerrilla Girls or the #MeToo movement? The answer may not be very positive, as feminist discussions and social activism have become difficult (Fincher 2014), and censorship has tightened (Lin 2017). Perhaps we have to wait until the day when Chinese contemporary women artists are no longer reluctant to be proud of their gender with the pretext 'first artist, then woman' (*The Art Newspaper* 2016). Perhaps we will then see the 'second sex' or 'half the sky' in China really thrive as women are able to freely create their own art, present their own genders and write their own art histories.

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