

Li Xiao Fei**ARTIST**

My name is Li Xiao Fei,

Since I was little, I started thinking about the question what kind of position that I will have in this art circle.

When I work with art, I do things through hands-on practices, rather than mere imaginations. Through endless hands-on practices, like I when did „Assembly Line“ it came through visit many factories, through feelings, through realizations.

ARTWORK

I have only very few works... I do everything myself! Filming and editing I do myself, occasionally I have assistants to help me.

It is quite difficult to describe what my works are like. I can only say about the works I have done in recent years, like „Assembly Line“ for example. It is a project about social and human development.

I cannot explain by words what my artworks are like. I always feel them through experiences and excursions to factories. And of course I concern myself with many social issues existing today in China. These issues have a very important place in my works.

It is to say that I care a great deal for “people” and “the present”, or “contemporary” people and society. And I use factories as an opportunity to connect them together.

PRODUCTION

I usually try not to think about what I want to do beforehand. I always use large amounts of footage and experiencing on location after having gotten all the footage.

Then I think about what I want to do with the footage I have. So, for me it comes first the footage and then ideas. And at the end I put some very strong concepts of mine into them, shaping them into a finished piece of artwork.

The one we are working on right now, is the project on salt, a pack of salt.

When we started filming, I never thought it would have developed this way. I did, and also wanted to add some interesting scenes and settings.

After having filmed it all I watch and re-watch the footage over and again, thinking about how to connect it all together, some interesting things came out, as a result, and in the end spending a very long time, perhaps even a few months to reflect on these questions.

MATERIAL

I don't really have any so-called fixed materials. Everything came out through experiencing, from going to the factories and discovering things.

And about the project I'm working on right now? The piece for Shanghai Biennale? This piece is a “Sculpture.”

This piece is that... I think people can see it. That through the process of filming it, I saw an aesthetically special side of it. That's why I brought it into use

That's why I don't base things on fixed models; I always make my decision according to different feelings and settings.

The materials in his film are much more abundant. In factories, I always film many detailed and partial little things. These little things tend to be neglected by other people, as they rarely think of these details. Because every factory is messy and chaotic. When you film only the large-scale scene,

perhaps you can get the sense of grandeur, empty grandeur. But if you pay attention to the little details, each detail can reveal the process of production.

MEDIUM

Yeah, it is to say that, one of my focal points is consideration for people. People and... especially (when) related to China, to our time certain social issues in today's China.

These considerations are my focal points on these issues. I think about how to enter them from an art perspective. We can only give a simple explanation. Like I mentioned before, the piece about a pack of salt.

In the past, I had many works about interviews.

Through him, through all types of people on the Assembly Line – the workers, the employers – people coming from all classes and dimensions, showing their feelings through these interviews. And then select a small part of the interviews, is the most quintessential part. And take it out.

Slowly when it comes to ordinary people (consumers), we gradually reduce the amount of words in it, both written and spoken. It is just to explain the production of salt. It's very brief, most of the contents are presented through images.

PROCESS

There is something relatively important in it. We can still explain it through my project "Assembly Line".

A few years ago, I didn't choose the factories, didn't choose meaning that I didn't have any choices. As long as (the factory) is open to me, I'll go. And I have gone to many of them ... until today, I have been to more than one hundred (factories).

But if it's now, I am more selective. Some factories are worth going while some are not. First about the size of the factory, and as well the "filmability" of the factory, and more important is that ... The symbolic meaning of the factory.

This is a big change I went through. And the way I work has also changed.

Before I never thought too much, as long as the factory was open to us, I would gladly go. And start filming right away... painstakingly. But usually, when I came back with much interesting footage ... Rarely yet did I find anything inspiring ...

They were rather rough ... And now ...I learned how to wait. Wait for right places.

Like we went to "Nanzhou" this time, for example this kind of place, I will go there again and again if possible. And you can shape many things out of it according to the different thoughts and ideas you have. Adding something very profound to it.

PRESENTATION

This... Because... Chosen for Berlin Biennale ... In the beginning, it was nine ...

Till today for my "Assembly Line" piece, I have made few conclusions ... little sections. I have categorized them. As the ones with interviews, the ones with Internet and the ones without sounds. Others are related to daily lives ... like "Salt." And then "Soy sauce", things as such. So, basically three categories.

And choosing nine pieces for Berlin Biennale ... At first we thought about showing nine pieces. And it was also nine when I communicated with the producer ... nine channels of recordings.

But later on there was some adjustment to the space. And that if he would like to show nine pieces in that space, I think it's very peculiar ... Mm ... not exactly my idea. So, according to the space I have designed such a ... such a shape.

And more particularly as for why I chose those pieces, because I decide which ones should be right next to each other according to that space.

INTENTION

To me, there are two types of goals: First one is that I just hope to continue it this way ... Each year, regularly. Not concerning too much ... consistently keep doing art. Smoothly without any intervals. Without any interruptions or any distractions.

If so... This is really, really what I want.

The second goal is to make things bigger, taking art to another grander, higher-level. I do feel quite ambitious. Wanting to do bigger projects that could influence more people. But at the moment this is not something that I ... that I can predict.

I can only say that this year I will do my best on each project. Taking each of my projects as close to perfection as possible. Rather than thinking about what kind of level I can achieve tomorrow. This (tomorrow) we do not concern so much.

METHOD

Actually... it is not... it is not like this. My pace of finding factories has slowed down since last year. Finding factories for me is a project that I designed to be... to be somehow long.

In the early phase, I kept to the basics ... Filming just the factories of people with lots of footage. And now slowly I begin to consider other things than factories.

Things beyond factories. Last year I went to Stockholm and New Zealand.

I filmed lots of many things outdoors ... Sceneries.

And ... In the future, I will start filming certain aspects of cities ... Certain details and certain parts of cities. For me factories are only a medium.

And slowly I will transfer to the society, in general. I always believe that society itself is a factory... as well as illusions of people.

And the third part can be on people and the way they socialize ... Wrapping this together ... So it's hard to say that I have to look for factories every day,

but rather that it is important to carefully observe each part and aspect of life.

ART

Yes, sometimes I think everything can be art, and sometimes I think nothing can be art. And sometimes I feel disappointed by my works, sometimes I truly appreciate my works.

Different ideas come at different phases. But overall I have a consistent standard for art. It's very difficult to define this standard with words, you can only come close to feeling it. It gives you this impulse right away.

I feel this impulse deep down from my heart. It is very strong. And the emotional echoes it creates, as well ... it doesn't necessarily have to be visual.

BIO

* 1973, Li Xiaofei is a Chinese artist who lives and works in Shanghai. He graduated from the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. Li is the Co-Founder and Director of the Creek Art Center and the Zendai Contemporary Art Exhibition Hall and Founder and Director of the Fei Contemporary Art Center (FCAC) Shanghai.

Li has been the recipient of grants and awards from multiple organizations, including Asia New Zealand Foundation Wellington Grants, New Zealand (2013), Iaspis International Residency Grant, Stockholm, Sweden (2013), the Sovereign Foundation Fellowship of Asian Cultural Council (Rockefeller Foundation), New York, USA (2011).

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Credits

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