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**The Geopolitics of Art Biennials in Chinese-speaking Regions
Since 1989**

Ph.D. Dissertation

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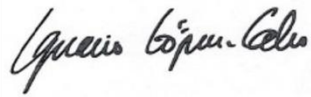

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Declaration of Authorship

I, (Gwen) Kuan-Ying Kuo, hereby declare that this dissertation is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Date: 10 May 2022

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Encountering the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, I worked on this dissertation while sheltered in a small studio with my son, a brave and supportive teenager. Though in such a trying time and the devastating loss of a family member in Taiwan during the fifth year of my doctoral training, I cherish this opportunity to pursue an academic goal.

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INTRODUCTION

A heated controversy embroiled in Taiwan at the end of 2012 when the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) announced its decision for the 2013 Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale: two of the three artists selected were not Taiwanese, even though participating in the Taiwan Pavilion symbolizes the honor of being the national representative to most Taiwanese artists.¹ It was the first time that the Taiwan Pavilion featured foreign artists. The Taiwan Pavilion's mission is to promote Taiwanese art on a global stage to gain international visibility, but this mission has encountered a rough patch.

The earliest three editions of the Taiwan Pavilion emphasized "Taiwan" in the curatorial themes: *Art Taiwan* (1995), *Taiwan Taiwan: Facing Faces* (1997), and *Close to Open: Taiwanese Artists Exposed* (1999). Repeatedly using "Taiwan" in the titles of an international art event highlights the TFAM's curatorial strategy: putting Taiwan on the global art map and showing Taiwan as an independent state with unique cultures. Different opinions about the Taiwan Pavilion circulated in Taiwan's art circles. Ying-Ying Lai observes the museum's original mission: "The TFAM intended to focus international attention upon current artistic developments in Taiwan, show the depth of Taiwanese art, gain international recognition for the Taiwanese state, and at the same time, realize the people's dreams of global acknowledgment of Taiwan" (Ying-Ying Lai

¹ The three artists were Kateřina Šedá (Czech Republic), Bernd Behr (Germany), and Chia-Wei Hsu (Taiwan). This was the first time that the Taipei Pavilion's exhibition did not have a full list of Taiwanese artists. La Biennale di Venezia, globally known as the Venice Biennale; henceforth, I use "the Venice Biennale" in this paper.

2008, 106). But since the Chinese government established the China Pavilion in 2003, Taiwan Pavilion was forced to move from national pavilions to non-state participators' parallel pavilions due to China's political intervention (Yu-yin Zhang 2019). Ten years later, "This is not a National Pavilion" became the theme of the 2013 Taiwan Parallel Pavilion and bluntly exposed the deteriorated stage for Taiwan's art. Moreover, two out of three selected artists being non-Taiwanese. The lack of Taiwanese artists in the 2013 Pavilion was alarming as if Taiwan's marginalized diplomatic condition became internalized in the curatorial concept.

To expand Taiwan's international space, the government has adopted a soft-power strategy² that integrates "new cultural and creative industries with regional cultures, creativity, and services" to transform the traditional economy and join international communities (Chang Bin Lee 2015, 472). Taiwan's government also promotes local artists to exhibit abroad with state sponsorship to break through diplomatic dilemma by encouraging cross-cultural exchanges (e.g., Yui-tan Chang 2006, Lai 2008, Ming Turner 2009, Chin-Tao Wu 2009, Chu-Chiun Wei 2013, Ministry of Culture 2013, Stéphane Corcuff 2016, Pei-Yi Lu 2017). One prominent example is the TFAM began hosting an international biennial exhibition on Taiwan's soil: The Taipei Biennial had a mission to represent Taiwan's cultural autonomy.

1. Research Background, Topic, and Questions

² Soft power refers to the ability of nation-states to win allies and gain influences by non-military means, including economic growth, technology, and cultural production (Joseph Nye 2004).

As addressed above, Taiwan's geopolitical condition influences Taiwanese cultural formation and visibility. In the essay "Positions," art historian ShiPu Wang examines how to situate the artists of Asian descent in expanded American art history and asks: "What are the creative ways that scholars and curators have devised to represent the fluid and divergent modes of visual production in the past century and our contemporary moment?" (ShiPu Wang 2017,77). Applying the intellectual inquiry of "positioning," I reexamine Taiwanese cultural production and its international position in today's disjunctive globalized world.³ Taiwan, also known as *Formosa* (meaning "beautiful island" in Portuguese), is a small island possessing a critical geopolitical location among various regional powers and international forces: the historical Iberian expansion, Dutch colonization, China, Japan, and the US. In "Memorandum on Formosa," General Douglas MacArthur once referred to Taiwan as "an unsinkable aircraft carrier" for the "counteroffensive operations by the United States Forces based on Okinawa and the Philippines."⁴ With China's frequent military drills and aggressive People's Liberation

³ Arjun Appadurai posits that new global cultural economy has the complex disjunctive order, more complicated than the center-periphery models to view the world. "The simplification of these many forces of homogenization can also be exploited by nation-states" (Appadurai 1991, 296).

⁴ The full text reads, "As a result of its geographic location and base potential, utilization of Formosa by a military power hostile to the United States may either counterbalance or overshadow the strategic importance of the central and southern flank of the United States front line position. Formosa in the hands of the Communists can be compared to an unsinkable aircraft carrier and submarine tender ideally located to accomplish Soviet offensive strategy and at the same time checkmate counteroffensive operations by United States Forces based on Okinawa and the Philippines. This unsinkable carrier-tender has the capacity to operate from ten to twenty air groups of types ranging from jet fighters to B-29 type bombers as well as to provide forward operating facilities for the short-range coastal submarines which are predominant in the Russian Asiatic Navy. If Formosa should be acquired by the Chinese Communists and bases thereon made available to the USSR, Russia will have acquired an additional 'fleet' which will have been obtained and can be maintained at an incomparably lower cost to the Soviets than could its equivalent of ten or twenty aircraft carriers with their supporting forces." See "Memorandum on

Army (PLA) aircrafts literally invading Taiwan's air zone in recent years, the Taiwan Strait was seen as "the most dangerous place on the earth" (Time 2021); Taiwan's geopolitical position also fits the United States' national interests in the Pacific connecting the Far East and South China sea. Meanwhile, Japan, Taiwan's former colonial government, quietly observes the complicated power dynamics and triangular relations among China-Taiwan-US to unfold.

Taiwan's geopolitical condition has become a site of power struggle: China's and America's national interests and global cultural impacts. As a result, Taiwan's geopolitics also infused with the island's hybrid cultural values. To examine "value," I use Chapter One to further unpack the complex connotations of "value" through David Graeber, John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, Arjun Appadurai, Pierre Bourdieu, and interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks.⁵ I want to interrogate: How does Taiwan's multi-cultural, or rather, multi-colonized history, reflect on or contribute to contemporary Taiwanese culture? How do Taiwanese artists and curators represent and enunciate Taiwan's unique cultural voices amidst the profound crisis of global forces?⁶

Formosa, by General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Commander in Chief, Far East, and Supreme Commander, Allied Powers, Japan." The Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute USA. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v07/d86>

⁵ I apply interdisciplinary approaches to examine the complexities of "value." For instance, Arjun Appadurai (1986) revises Marx's notion of commodity value, and views refocuses on the thing (instead of the commodity) itself; Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) examine cultural identity and cultural values within pervasive global capitalism; David Graeber (2001) thoroughly reviews different value theories in sociological, economic, and linguistic approaches. Chapter One elaborates each of these theoretic frameworks in detail.

⁶ I use the term "enunciation" to echo Homi K. Bhabha's notion of cultural hybridity. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha elaborates the concept of cultural hybridity to deconstruct the colonizing and the colonized binary. In a place with colonized history, such as in

Most art history textbooks categorize Taiwan's art within China's art history.⁷ Similar to Taiwan's obscured diplomatic locus, Taiwan's cultural production is often shadowed, if not invisible, by Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s overreaching global influences. Taiwan's precarious sovereignty and CCP's hostile influence operation also prevent Taiwanese artists and professionals from participating in the official international events as national representatives; the aforementioned Taiwan Pavilion case was evidence.⁸

My argument is that contemporary art production is more than art for art's sake but, rather, an interdisciplinary contested terrain socially constructed, politically charged, economically financed, and digitally mediated. My research examines contemporary Sinophone cultural productions in a greater scope: the international art biennial scene. The history of the art biennial is essentially global. My dissertation focuses on the first art biennials in Taiwan and China, the Taipei Biennial and the Shanghai Biennale, and positions them in the global context with geopolitical examination and historical review. As history proves that Taiwan's geopolitical condition has always represented as a strategic value to the expanding global powers, Taiwan's marginalized yet intricate position, in turn, also contributes to the island's cultural (in)visibility that deserves multi-disciplinary scholarly attention.⁹

Taiwan, enunciation implies that culture has no fixity and "cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation." (1994, 55)

⁷ See Literature Review section.

⁸ See Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan. "Instances of China's Interference with Taiwan's International Presence," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan. <https://en.mofa.gov.tw/cl.aspx?n=1510>

From the historical viewpoint, Taiwan has been situated in constant tensions between Chinese Empire and Imperial Japan, and now between China and the US. After Japan surrendered at the end of World War II (1939-1945), Taiwan was placed under the regime of the Republic of China (ROC) when the Chinese Nationalist Party (“Kuomintang” in Chinese; KMT) became Taiwan’s ruling class. To secure the KMT’s regime, on 28 February 1947, the KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek conducted a mass killing of Taiwanese elites from the pre-Japanese colonization era. This tragedy, memorialized as the 228 Massacre, deeply saddened and silenced Taiwanese people for the nearly four decades of martial law, also known as Taiwan’s white terror era.¹⁰

In 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took over mainland China and established the People’s Republic of China (PRC); In 1979, the US abolished the official diplomatic relations with the ROC/Taiwan and recognized the PRC as the only legitimate Chinese government. These historical events have ingrained the tricky cultural connections and political tensions between Taiwan and China. As the major international communities could not recognize Taiwan’s sovereignty, many Taiwanese artists, filmmakers, and cultural producers continue to join international events individually without national representation nor sponsorship. The government in Taiwan consistently strives joining international communities through promoting economic activities, digital manufacturing industries, and hosting international events such as the art biennial.¹¹

⁹ Chapter One further unpacks the complex connotations of “value” with interdisciplinary frameworks.

¹⁰ See, also, Taiwanese American Organizations, "228 Massacre," *OFTAIWAN*. Taiwanese American Organizations. <https://oftaiwan.org/history/white-terror/228-massacre>

However, existing literature tends to view that the Taipei Biennial's several editions – failed its mission – boosting Taiwanese art or cultural subjectivity on the global stage – due to the limited budget, unbalanced relationships between local and international art biennials, and the Biennial institution's favoring foreign curators.¹²

Against these assumptions, my claim is that the Taipei Biennial's challenges are beyond the obvious reasons on the surface of the art scene. I refocus on the Taipei Biennial (founded in 1992) and the Shanghai Biennale (founded in 1996) and view them as contemporary cultural productions on the global map: Using the same language to represent the best art in nearby regions, these two Sinophone Biennials compete to attract overlapping international curators and artists in the field of global art knowledge production.¹³ My research examines Taiwan's historical past, geopolitical condition, the history of art biennial's global proliferation, contemporary art scenes across the Taiwan Strait within different political regimes, and observes the international relations in these events. My goal is to explore the hidden meanings of these art biennials amid the cross-Strait tensions, in which cultural issues are often also political.

¹¹ In addition to Taiwan's Ministry of Culture promoting international cultural exchanges through Taiwanese art projects, Taiwan's government invests on digital soft power, and initiated an "Asian Silicon Valley" project to promote digital soft power and economic innovation. See "Vice President Opens Base for 'Asian Silicon Valley,'" *Taipei Times*, December 27, 2016, <http://taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2016/12/27/2003662002>.

¹² See Literature Review section.

¹³ Both the Taipei Biennial and the Shanghai Biennale have been recognized among the "World's Top 20 Biennials and Triennials" (Artnet 2014).

For both Taiwan and China, the US plays a critical role in diplomatic and cultural events. The US Information Service office in Taipei (USIS-Taipei, America's de facto embassy in Taiwan) has organized art events and performances to promote American culture and ideology to "enhance so-called 'cross-cultural understanding' (without acknowledging the uneven power dynamic between the two countries, of course) in order to ensure Taiwan's cooperation in aiding US Cold War objectives" (Wang 2020, 5). As the Cold War prolonged the split of two political regimes in Taiwan and China, Washington adopted a strategically ambiguous relationship with Taipei: keeping robust economic and cultural exchanges without recognizing its sovereignty.

Taiwan's lack of official diplomatic stance fundamentally affects its cultural formation and Taiwanese cultural identity. Wang (2020) points out a pivotal connection between the US-ROC diplomatic project and Taiwan's cultural construction in the post-World War II era. Along these lines, An-yi Pan (2014) explores how multiple aspects of globalization have inspired contemporary Taiwanese artists. Edward Vickers (2008) likewise finds that Taiwan's museum exhibitions reflect distinctive pluralism with hybrid local cultures. From these perspectives, Taiwan's diverse arts and cultural productions enhance the country's global networks beyond the neighboring hostile Chinese "motherland." Despite China claims Taiwan as one of its provinces, the US has unofficial solid ties with Taiwan's economic and cultural industries, and the cheaper labor for advanced technology manufacturing (Evan A. Feigenbaum 2020). American mainstream media often praises Taiwan as the beacon of democracy in Chinese-speaking regions, including "Taiwan Ranks Among Top 10 Democracies in Annual Index," the most recent report released upon this dissertation's completion (Washington Examiner 2020, Reuters

2020, VOA 2022, for example). With these in mind, Taiwan's cultural formation is less determined or defined by its geographic location or nation-state boundaries, though Taiwan's diplomatic stance has always been marginalized within the framework of US-China geopolitical competition. When President Bill Clinton visited China in 1998, he reaffirmed that there were no "two Chinas" because the Chinese Communist Party could not accept the Republic of China/Taiwan as a nation-state. Henceforth, the US cannot support Taiwan's membership in international organizations that require nation-statehood.¹⁴ Moreover, China's increasing economy and global influences since joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) have also added risks to Taiwan's international status (Feigenbaum 2020). Under these circumstances, the Taiwanese government actively adopts soft-power tactics through business, digital and creative content industries (such as arts, design, fashion, and education, for instance) to sustain its international relations.¹⁵

Taiwan's government has built the Hsinchu Science Park special industrial zone as a domestic Silicon Valley to nurture Taiwanese STEM talents (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) for technological soft power. Since the 1980s, Taiwan's broader Hsinchu-Taipei region and California's Silicon Valley have shared STEM human

¹⁴ Jim Mann, "Clinton 1st to OK China, Taiwan '3 No's,'" *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1998, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1998-jul-08-mn-1834-story.html>.

¹⁵ Essential elements in Taiwan's soft-power strategy include developing digital technology, cultural industries, and creative content industries. See Chang Bin Lee. "Cultural Policy and Governance: Reviewing Policies Related to Cultural and Creative Industries Implemented by the Central Government of Taiwan between 2002 and 2012" in *Review of Policy Research*, Vol. 32, No. 4. (2015): 465-84.

resources that support semiconductor and digital industries.¹⁶ Taiwanese big tech companies – Asus, Foxconn, Quanta, BenQ, MediaTek, United Microelectronics Corp., Compal Electronics, to name a few – have also set headquarters at the Hsinchu Science Park.

The production of Taiwan's Silicon Valley has boosted the island's geopolitical importance that ties into America's international interests and leadership. For example, the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) produces the most advanced chips and takes nearly 70 percent of the global market share (Forbes 2021). Thus, the global chip shortage highlights Taiwan's chip manufacturing demanded by the US and China, two competing global powers. Since July 2020, Taiwan has agreed with the US to halt the shipment of chips to China's tech giant Huawei.¹⁷ Moreover, TSMC produces chips for smartphones, electric cars, supercomputers, and the US fighter jets to help Taiwan defend itself from the CCP's potential invasion and constant military drills into Taiwan's air defense zone. In the intensifying US-China trade war and chip competition, Taiwan has become increasingly crucial to both sides. To sustain America's leading status in global politics and economy, the state government of Arizona welcomed TSMC to establish semiconductor fabrication plants in Phoenix.¹⁸ That is to say, the

¹⁶ Hsiang-ting Lee and Scott Williams, "Linking Taiwan to Silicon Valley: The Taiwan Innovation Entrepreneurship Center," *Taiwan Panorama*, August 2016. <https://www.taiwan-panorama.com/en/Articles/Details?Guid=8f973b03-b461-455b-bfae-c370b28358c8>

¹⁷ Cheng Ting-Fang and Laily Li, "TSMC plans to halt chip supplies to Huawei in 2 months". *Nikkei Asia*. July 16, 2020. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Huawei-crackdown/TSMC-plans-to-halt-chip-supplies-to-Huawei-in-2-months>

¹⁸ See Office of the Governor Doug Ducey, "TSMC to Build Advanced Semiconductor Factory in Arizona," *Arizona State Government*. May 14, 2020.

TSMC's global high demand plays a vital role as Taiwan's "silicon shield" protecting the island from China's military threat (Feigenbaum 2021). In the long run, Taiwanese digital soft power effectively demonstrates Taiwan's geopolitical importance in the US-China tech competition.

In a parallel development, Taiwan's cultural policy encourages art production using digital technology to boost cultural soft power and creative content projects (e.g., Yui-tan Chang 2006, Jeph Lo 2007, CB Lee 2015). Since 2002, Taiwan's Council for Cultural Affairs (later renamed the Ministry of Culture in Taiwan, or MOC) initiated "Challenge 2008 - National Development Plan."¹⁹ Cited from the English version published by the MOC, the guidelines for Museums and International Exchanges address:

These international exchange activities will not only help local citizens to better understand the current development of cultural heritage preservation in the world, but also help the international community know more about Taiwan's precious cultural heritage and its bid to share its cultural wealth with the world.²⁰

Under the MOC's policy, the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMFA) launched the "Digital Art Creation Project" sponsoring local digital art events and international artists to exhibit and perform at the NTMFA.²¹

<https://azgovernor.gov/governor/news/2020/05/tsmc-build-advanced-semiconductor-factory-arizona>.

¹⁹ Ministry of Executive Council, "Challenge 2008: National Development Plan," *Ministry of Executive Council*, Taiwan. No. 0910027097. May 31, 2002. p.44-45.

²⁰ See Ministry of Culture, Taiwan. "Museums and International Exchanges." https://www.moc.gov.tw/en/content_136.html.

²¹ National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMFA), "A Brief History of NTMFA Digital Art Project," *National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts*, 2017. <https://www.digiarts.org.tw/DigiArts/History/Chi>.

New media inspires new exhibition displays, and “exhibition design has evolved as a new discipline, as an apex of all media and effects” (Erkki Hahtamo 2013, 5). Taiwanese cultural productions have also incorporated digital media as Taiwan’s policymakers promoting vibrant local digital industries. The NTMFA has hosted the Taiwan Biennial since 2007 and implements the Sponsorship for Digital and Art Industries Cross-disciplinary Cooperation, encouraging Taiwanese artists to use digital technology in arts and creative projects.²² In Taiwan’s capital, the Taipei Digital Art Center is another state-sponsored space providing workshops and art exhibitions. These digital art venues are emerged after 2000 and they represent contemporary Taiwanese cultural hybridity with digital industries.

As part of contemporary Taiwan’s cultural production, the launch of the Taipei Biennial is a milestone of creating an international art event on Taiwan’s soil; The Taipei Biennial adopted the form of an international art biennial, which is equivalent to the Olympics of the art world in scope. Tracing back to the art biennial’s history, the Venice Biennale (established in 1895) was the first and only biennial exhibition for more than a half-century until the Bienal de São Paulo emerged in 1951. The Venice Biennale gradually evolved into a grand-scale exposition with multinational pavilions representing a miniature art world.²³ However, the first Bienal de São Paulo was founded and

²² See National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMFA), “Digital Art Creation Project” and “Sponsorship for Digital and Art Industries Cross-disciplinary Cooperation.” *National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMFA)*. <https://www.digiarts.org.tw/DigiArts/History/Chi> and <https://rb.gy/t9blxc>.

²³ The Universal Survey Museum is a museum that surveys artworks worldwide and preserves them for the public (Duncan and Wallach 2004).

demonstrated an alternative version of global art from a Latin American perspective (See Table 1). Since the Bienal de São Paulo launched, many countries around the globe have been inspired to host biennial or triennial art events with geopolitical significance and adopted “strategic globality,” a term framed by the curator and political scientist and Okwui Enwezor.²⁴ Observing how the biennial exhibitions emerged across the globe, Enwezor describes “strategic globality” as a way for new biennials demonstrate their abilities and agencies to create global art knowledge (Okwui Enwezor 2004, 108).

The 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall signified the end of the Cold War, which brought about the emergence of scholarship on global capitalism. Charles Esche posits that the year 1989 is also crucial to the art biennial’s history with three biennial exhibitions happening in that year:

The more immediate and tangible effects of the Bienal de La Habana, ‘Magiciens de la Terre’ and ‘The Other Story’ were actually felt outside rather than inside the old imperialist countries, where it was generally presumed that 1989 represented a victory rather than a new series of challenges. The new form of biennial ventured by Lillian Llanes Godoy, Gerardo Mosquera and the rest of the team at the Centro Wifredo Lam was extended and modified in Eastern Europe, Asia and parts of Africa. (Charles Esche 1989, 11)

The art biennials’ global phenomenon also leads to a liberation of cultural hybridity. To view the art biennials’ hybrid performances, I highlight Homi Bhabha’s notion of cultural hybridity and Marwan Kraidy’s application. Bhabha argues that an ambivalent “third space” is formed in the process of cultural configuration, and the third space “may open

²⁴ Okwui Enwezor (1963-2019) was an influential Nigerian curator and educator with a Ph.D. degree and training in Political Science at the Columbia University. He curated various international art biennials and was selected as the 20th out of 100 most powerful art professionals globally by *ArtReview* in 2016 and has been on the Power 100 list for a decade (2006-2016). I was fortunate to be Dr. Enwezor’s student during his tenure at the San Francisco Art Institute.

the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism or multiculturalism of the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*" (1994, 38). *Applying Bhabha's concept*, Kraidy interprets cultural globalization with cultural hybridity: "Hybridity is one of the emblematic notions of our era. It captures the spirit of the times with its obligatory celebration of cultural difference and fusion, and it resonates with the globalization mantra of unfettered economic exchanges and the supposedly inevitable transformation of all cultures" (2006, 1). To put it another way, the emerging art biennials in every continent adopt the Venetian model with various local cultural perspectives, creating hybrid and transnational artistic performances.

As the art world witnesses the art biennial's global proliferation, these emerging Biennials present innovative curatorial practices beyond traditional museums' white-box displays, and demystify the museum's authority by showing art outside museums' walls. In museum settings, art historian Carol Duncan studies how conventional museums often adopt an architectural style resembling the Greco-Roman temple. Within such space, museum exhibitions enhance the visitor's "ritual attention to the artwork, a mixed feeling of fear (as in a courthouse) and fascination (as in a palace)" (1995, 16). In contrast, contemporary art biennials challenge the traditional settings and organize exhibitions in public locations or at street corners. For instance, Hans Ulrich Obrist curated the *Museum on the Move*, a mobile exhibition across several countries – calling for artists to work with scientists and architects in various locales. Obrist showcases his unique curatorial method different from hanging paintings on white walls in a white-cube space inside a Greco-Roman temple architecture. Obrist's other innovative curatorial

cooperation with curator Hou Hanru, *Cities on the Move*, was a touring exhibition that brought artists and local cultural elites from seven Asian cities; these curators traveled together across continents during the exhibition (Adrian George 2015, 150). In these curatorial innovations, the emerging art biennials on different continents have created a multi-centered art world. At the center of these art biennials, the international pavilions, artists, curators, and their geopolitical relations are generating contemporary art knowledge.

Today, there are more than 270 art biennials worldwide, seventeen of them in Chinese-speaking regions (See Table 2, Table 3, and Table 14). Though the pervasive global capitalism might damage the uniqueness of local cultures, the emergence of art biennials reflects a decentralized contemporary art world; in other words, what the art biennials display also represents the exhibition's geopolitical stance. The geopolitics of the art biennials create dynamic relations and interactions among international curators, artists, and nation-states that define today's global art.

Searching for the meanings of ever-changing global art, my research focuses on the first two Sinophone art biennials in local and global contexts. The Taipei Biennial was officially established in 1992, making it the first art biennial in Asia (UiU 2021, Biennial Foundation 2021). The Taipei Biennial also serves as a platform for Taiwan's cultural diplomacy: exchanging arts and cultural information among nations to foster the mutual understanding of their peoples (Nye 2008, 96). While across the Taiwan Strait, the Shanghai Biennale was founded in 1996 to compete by representing the lively contemporary art scene in Chinese-speaking regions (See Table 2). To uncover the complex meanings between these two Sinophone art biennials, my research firstly

examines the historical and social backgrounds that foster these two events. I apply interdisciplinary theoretical tools to explore: how did the end of Taiwan's martial law nurture a society for democratic value, freedom of self-expression, and the birth of the Taipei Biennial? How did China's economic reforms set the ground for the Shanghai Biennale? How do these art biennials create a transnational space connecting with the local and international art scene? In global contexts, what are the similarities and balances showing in these two Biennials? What role does digital media play in these two events facilitating artistic and cultural hybridization? Importantly, what are the geopolitical meanings of the art biennial in an increasingly globalized and digitized world?

2. Literature Review

Art historian Michael Sullivan reviews the trajectory of Chinese art history with the country's political, social, and economic transformations. In his book *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China* (1996), Sullivan examines modern Chinese art corresponding to social and political events: the impact of the West (1900-1937); World War II and the Civil War (1937-1949); and art in the era of Mao Zedong (1949-1976). However, he categorizes "Art in Taiwan" in one of the sections of a chapter. Another textbook on modern art in Chinese-speaking regions, *The Art of Modern China* (2012) by scholars Julia Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, also frames Chinese art within modern Chinese

political and cultural movements. But the section about Taiwan's art is combined with Hong Kong's in one chapter titled "Alternative Chinas: Hong Kong and Taiwan."²⁵

Contemporary Taiwanese art is shaped by different social, political, and historical elements from contemporary Chinese art, I posit, and the pervasive globalization and digitally mediated information further complicate cultural productions across the Taiwan Strait. Hence, my dissertation positions the Taipei Biennial in the greater field of global art and cultural production to uncover its meanings beyond conventional Chinese cultural influence. As the creation of cultural events are inseparable from social environments, contemporary art practices in Taiwan and China are growing out from each regime's socio-economic context. In Taiwan, when the thirty-eight-year martial law (1949–1987) was lifted, arts and cultural events have gradually adapted to a more liberal society, embracing diverse cultural elements from international to indigenous traditions. Amid Taiwan's dynamic societal transition, the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) was founded in 1983.²⁶ In "Mapping Taiwan: Strategies of Taiwan's International Art," Ying-Ying Lai reviews: "As early as 1983 when the *International Biennial Print Exhibition*,

²⁵ The chapters in *The Art of Modern China* include: Chinese Art in the Age of Imperialism: The Opium War to the Treaty of Shimonoseki, 1842–1895; Art in the Creation of a New Nation: The Overthrow of the Qing and the Early Republic, 1895–1920; Art in the New Culture of the 1920s; Modern Art in the 1930s; The Golden Age of Guohua in the 1930s; Art in Wartime, 1937–1949; Western-Style Art under Mao, 1949–1966; Ink Painting, Lianhuanhua, and Woodcuts under Mao, 1949–1966; Art of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966–1976; Art after Mao, 1976–1989; Alternative Chinas: Hong Kong and Taiwan; No U-Turn: Chinese Art after 1989; The New Millennium, and the Chinese Century.

²⁶ About the founding Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Ying-ying Lai observes: "Since its inauguration in 1983, TFAM has promoted modern and contemporary art organizing many exhibitions and competitions to fulfill its mission...The biennials play a positive role in promoting Taiwan's cultural diplomacy" (Lai 2008, 104).

ROC opened at the TFAM, organizers began incorporating the nation's name into the exhibition theme to ensure national recognition, funding, and support. It was dear even then those international exhibitions serve as useful channels for trans-national art communication" (Lai 2008, 106). Lai confirms this *International Biennial Print Exhibition* setting the ground for the Taipei Biennial as an international stage.

Most reviews of on the Taipei Biennial recognize its mission for global networks. In "Taipei Fine Arts Museum: Scandals and Reform," Felix Schober explores: "Various editions of the Taipei Biennials stage the world in Taiwan, using the exhibiting spaces of the museum to accomplish Taiwanese arts' international fame, and to broaden local audience's perspectives on the diversity of culture" (Schober 2004, 5). Ming Turner observes the evolution of the Taipei Biennial with various themes regarding local and global issues, such as the rapid urbanization in the Asia-Pacific regions: "Taipei, being the capital of Taiwan, has been the spotlight of the Taiwanese government's policy and social resources distribution. The Taipei Biennial is organized to seek a Taiwanese identity in terms of history, nation, politics and culture in the spheres of globalization, westernization, industrialization and postcoloniality" (2009, 291). Lai praises the Taipei Biennial for it creates positive cultural impacts: "First, it is highly inspirational for local Taiwanese audience to be exposed to such a wide range of artworks through the exhibiting mechanisms of TFAM. Not only works of art are brought out in these exhibitions, but also other social structures, historical frameworks and cultural lineages from which these works of art originate are put on view" (Lai 2008, 108). These observations indicate that the Taipei Biennial becomes an event for international cultural exchanges among artists, curators, and audiences.

While Taiwanese artists enjoy an international art biennial at home, the Taipei Biennial's international outreach is often challenging. Chin-Tao Wu investigates the power relations among the art biennials: "In the global art scene, it is the aspired prospect for cities in 'developing' countries to be internationalized... This is a way of connecting with the international world, and Taipei Biennial is no exception."²⁷ As Taiwan continually negotiates its international space, Lai asks: "Taiwan constantly finds itself positioned in the periphery. How might Taiwanese curators effectively develop their own cultural perspectives when contemporary theories of philosophy, sociology, and aesthetics are largely Anglo European centric?" (Lai 2008, 110) CT Wu considers that the global art biennial scene still possesses a hierarchical structure: "Although it is forever shifting, the global art world nevertheless maintains a basic structure: concentric and hierarchical, we can imagine it as a three-dimensional spiral, not unlike the interior of the Guggenheim in New York. Concentric because there are centers, or semi-centers, and peripheries as well" (CT Wu 2009, 122). These remarks acknowledge that the Taipei Biennial strives to be an active participant in the global art biennial scene and yet encounters various restrictions; For instance, the budget:

Its very limited budget means that it is unlikely to achieve the desired goals. More work needs to be done, and perhaps some long-term package deals, such as formulation of topical issues, establishment of domestic as well as international forum or discursive institutions, operations of international public relations and so on, must be thought out and implemented in order to overcome these difficulties. (Lai 2008, 110)

Reviewing the Taipei Biennial's several events, Pei-Yi Lu points out the gap between the Biennial's mission and its performances: "The Taipei Biennial has failed to deliver on its

²⁷ Chin-tao Wu, "Globalized Cultural Politics [*guoji hua de wenhua zhengzhi*]." ArtCo, issue 147, 2004, p.92.

mission and a tendency towards invisible self-colonialization could be a fundamental reason behind the operation of the Taipei Biennial curatorial mechanism” (Pei-Yi Lu 2017, 105).

However, considering the Taipei Biennial’s “success” based on its internal budget or Taiwan’s domestic politics might be insufficient, I propose; the fundamental issues that impede Taiwanese enunciation through the art biennial demand interdisciplinary reexaminations within broader social, historical, and global contexts. Taiwanese complex and sometimes muted cultural enunciation has various causes that call for researchers revisiting Taiwan’s historical past: a multiple colonized island as a locus of expanding global power competition. To uncover Taiwan’s connection with the world, I adopt a unique perspective to view Taiwan as a “global island”: “how Taiwan has played a crucial role in transnational processes as a site of global knowledge production” (Lin, Read, and Thilly 2019, 5). Henceforth, I posit that centering Taiwan’s locus of in-betweenness with a global vision and exploring Taiwan within a global context. Through this worldview, we can see Taiwan has shaped by the island’s international power-relations and, as a result, Taiwan also has an impact on shaping the global connections.

While positioning Taiwan in a global framework, Shu-Mei Shih asks: “What does globalization mean for a small island without nation-state status, with a history of multiple colonialisms, and living in the threatening shadow of a rising super power?” (Shih 2003, 143) Shih suggests that “globalization may be Taiwan’s survival strategy” and supports her claim with an elegant yet eloquent art installation by Taiwanese female artist Mali Wu. Mali Wu shredded Confucian books, Buddhist scripts, the Bible, Japanese

texts, literature by Nobel laureates, and many classic texts from different cultures; Wu then stored these paper strips with care in a glass bottle. The artist named this art installation *The Library* and presented it in the Taiwan Pavilion at the 1995 Venice Biennial. “Perhaps we can draw from Mali Wu’s proposal for cultural inauthenticity as the theoretical basis for a new culture in Taiwan that creates itself from the destruction of cultural authenticities by reshaping them into a unique entity,” Shu-Mei Shih concludes in her essay: “Those with the daring resolve to challenge and overthrow authenticities will qualify, in this sense, to be the New Taiwanese” (2003, 149). Mali Wu’s art installation faithfully mirrors Taiwanese generations’ efforts, consciously or unconsciously, to restore all the fragmented cultural memories. These sporadic cultural recollections have occurred throughout Taiwan’s history; various colonized historical transitions with different “official languages” imposed on people to unlearn the past. I posit, only by recognizing the historical amnesia can these cultural fractures regenerate a new and hybrid cultural identity: as an amalgam of the scriptures in Chinese, Japanese, English, and many world languages becoming *The Library* at the oldest art biennale (Image 1).

Recognizing Taiwan as a “global island” without being absent from the world history, my research takes an engaging stance to discover the Taipei Biennial’s position on the globe: The Taipei Biennial was born in the post-martial law Taiwan, and born with the art biennials’ global proliferation since 1989. Curator Charles Esche studies various art biennials that emerged around 1989: “The new form of biennial ... was extended and modified in Eastern Europe, Asia and parts of Africa” (Esche 1989, 11). Researchers have illustrated new global art trends through these later emerged art biennials in

different continents. For instance, James Meyer explores the “global tendencies” of the art biennial and the circulation of artists and curators among these large-scale exhibitions (Meyer 2003, 152). These findings confirm that these art biennial exhibitions, including the Taipei Biennial, are essentially international performances and have empowered a group of independent curators and artists with shared artistic values.

CT Wu’s data further indicates that most art biennial participating artists were still active in Europe or North America:

Although the 1989 *Magiciens de la terre* exhibition at the Pompidou Centre is generally considered the first truly international exhibition and a trend-setter for the next decade, North Americans and Europeans were still predominant at the 1992 and 1997 *documentas*. The real change came with Okwui Enwezor’s *documenta 11* in 2002, when the proportion of Western artists fell to a more respectable sixty per cent. It remained fixed at this lower level in 2007 (CT Wu 2009, 109).

To create a more inclusive global art biennial scene, Okwui Enwezor has advocated a “G7 for biennials... [for] not to further dilute the ‘cachet’ of this incredibly ambiguous global brand” (Enwezor 2003, 19). Atreyee Gupta also envisions a new inclusive global art history by her research on Asia’s energetic contemporary art scene and cultural production, such as the Asian Art Archive networking many Asian cultural institutes to store historical documents. Gupta considers these networks as positive effects of cultural globalization: “The internationalization of art history prompts collaborations premised on an unspoken, even unacknowledged, hierarchy of power and privilege” (2017, 25). Gupta suggests that scholars in the Global North should work with and rely on the knowledge “not previously circulated in Anglophone contexts” (Ibid). These research on the international art biennials have a shared vision: the global art scene should have multiple centers around the world, and these centers should be equally important.

In this scope of the contemporary world, the Shanghai Biennial also exemplifies an alternative vision of global art. Studying the connection between Shanghai's rapid urbanization and the founding of the Shanghai Biennale, Wu Mo finds that "the Shanghai municipal government and the Shanghai Art Museum were committed to establishing an international profile" for the city's cultural branding (Wu Mo 2020, 27). The Shanghai municipal government's urban development plan is nothing new compared with many international cities' governments using the art biennial as a device for global city competition. Observers of the Taipei Biennial also describe the exhibition as Taipei's "city branding" for Taiwan's international recognition (Lai 2008, 110). Both Taipei and Shanghai are "global cities," borrowing Saskia Sassen's description of "global cities" that refer to cities with "dynamics and processes that get territorialized at these diverse scales can in principle be regional, national or global" (Sassen 2005, 27). In this sense, the art biennial helps enhance the city's cultural capital as one center of the global art scene.

Viewing Taipei and Shanghai on the global map, both the Taipei Biennial and the Shanghai Biennale as Sinophone art biennials have boosted the media outreach effects to attract international art patrons and tourists to Chinese-economic regions; despite these two events competing with each other amid the cross-Strait political tensions. In particular, the air travel from Shanghai to Taipei takes less than two hours, the international art patrons can visit both Biennials in one trip. These international participators – including curators, artists, art media, journalists, audiences, art patrons – produce and circulate the Biennial's symbolic value and social capital; For the hosted city, joining the global art biennial club gains symbolic capital with potential economic

profit. Chapter One further applies Pierre Bourdieu's theory on the art biennials to explore their cultural, social, and symbolic capital.

The inauguration of the Shanghai Biennale represents China's opening for exchanging international cultural values along with its open market for economic growth. However, the contemporary Chinese art scene did not exist a few decades ago. The aesthetics of contemporary Chinese art seems to converge with its internationally recognized avant-garde spirit, but art critic Minglu Gao argues that the notion of modernity in contemporary Chinese art is on a distinctly different route from Western art:

Even at the dawn of the twenty-first century, amid rapid globalization, “modern [xiandai]” is still a preferred term, as evident in phrases like “modern fashion [xiandai shishang],” “modern me-tropolis [xiandai dushi],” “modern style [xiandai fengmao],” and “modern design [xiandai sheji].” Of course, these designations all refer to the present moment of their utterance, not to the modern era of Europe and the United States since the late eighteenth century, nor to the time and taste of Western artistic Modernism. Meanwhile, contemporary Chinese also very frequently use the term “con-temporaneity [dangdaixing]” as a substitute for “modernity” (Minglu Gao 2011, 133).

To understand contemporary Chinese art, scholars emphasize that it is critical to realize the impact of the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution, or briefly “the Cultural Revolution” (Wu Hung 2000, Hou Hanru 2002, Jiehong Jiang 2008, Gao 2011, for example). During the Cultural Revolution, art and cultural production served communist ideology by glorifying Chairman Mao Zedong, while artists had to work under intense political scrutiny as the Revolution suppressed people's free speech and imposed thought control (Jiang 2011). During the 1970s, many experimental art groups paved the ground for future contemporary artists; as scholars discovered, the unique aesthetics in these contemporary Chinese art groups appear to be reactions against the artistic conformity, yet the spirit of Chinese avant-garde was revolutionary and could not clean cut from the

Cultural Revolution's influences (W. Hung 2000, Hou 2002, Jiang 2011 Gao 2011). For instance, Wu Hung (2010) reviews the experimental Chinese art movements embraced mass movement methods, and the artists quickly adopted new aesthetics different from the orthodoxy of Socialist Realism art style in communist countries. *The Stars* – an experimental art group arose in the 1970s – actively organized events with provocative and experimental artworks for public view, while the artists confronted official scrutiny (W. Hung 2000, 83). Minglu Gao (2011) also analyzes contemporary Chinese artists' practices during the '85 New Wave Movement, they experimented with the notion of modernity and various practices later known as Political Pop and Cynical Realism.²⁸ Among these practices, a groundbreaking event entitled *The Third Stars Art Exhibition* was displayed at Beijing's National Art Gallery in 1989. This event tried to make a statement about the artists breaking through China's state-run exhibition hall: "Chinese experimental art had a strong tendency to expand into the public sphere and participate in social movements. Members of the group followed a mass movement action called *duoguan* – taking over an official institution – derived from the Cultural Revolution itself" (W. Hung 2000, 83). Correspondingly, Jiehong Jiang compares China's avant-garde art practices in the 1970s with the widespread destruction of traditional Chinese material culture by the Red Guards. Jiang argues that the rebellious spirit in contemporary Chinese art practice is an extension of Mao's legacy (Jiang 2008).

²⁸ Minglu Gao curated contemporary Chinese art exhibitions in different cities that promote contemporary Chinese art's international fame. The most prominent exhibitions include the following: *China/Avant-Garde* (Beijing, 1989), *Inside Out: New Chinese Art* (Asia Society, New York, 1998), and *The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art* (Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 2005).

With China's economic reform in the post-Mao era, Shanghai experienced rapid urbanization in a short period of time, transforming itself into the most cosmopolitan and international hub on China's east coast connecting with international markets (W. Hung 2000, Wen-hsin Yeh 2007, Barbara Pollack 2018, Siqi Tu 2018, Mo 2020): "The West Bund Cultural Corridor in Shanghai is the latest entrance in a global competition to attract investment by combining cultural institutions with real-estate megaprojects" (Tu 2018, 1). Shanghai's cultural vibe stimulated the birth of the Shanghai Biennale in 1996; this international art event also represents China's ambition to build a cultural capital networking with the global art world. Among various editions of the Shanghai Biennale, the 2000 Shanghai Biennale is often praised as a groundbreaking event in China's art scene:

Zhu Qingsheng – a Peking University professor who is also an avant-garde artist and critic – claimed that the 2000 Shanghai Biennale was the most important Chinese exhibition since the 1989 China/Avant-Garde exhibition. Gu Chenfeng – another veteran organizer and critic of experimental art – compared the 2000 Shanghai Biennale with the 1992 Guangzhou Biennale organized by independent curators, which according to him initiated many new curatorial practices that then influenced subsequent art exhibitions in China. (W. Hung 2000, 94)

In other words, the 2000 Shanghai Biennale was seen as a leading-edge event for it unprecedentedly included video art and installation works that "legalized" Chinese experimental art in a state-permitted exhibition. Chapter Three presents a more detailed review of the Shanghai Biennial.

3. Research Methods, Data Sources, and Analysis

This dissertation intervenes in the fields of arts and cultural industries, focusing on the case study of Sinophone art biennial exhibitions as a site of global knowledge

production and multi-disciplinary contested terrain. These cultural events have profound geopolitical meanings and values in historical, socio-economic, international politics, and cultural aspects. My research aims to uncover these values and geopolitical meanings by applying interdisciplinary theoretical tools – including museum studies, art history, cultural industries, postcolonial and feminist theories.

This dissertation consists of archival research and case studies from accredited resources and interviews. My research data include scholarships from peer-reviewed journals, international art biennials' official websites, accredited international art media and museum resources, including the official museums of the Taipei Biennial and the Shanghai Biennale: The Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) and the Power Station of Art (PSA), respectively; as well as the government released data in English, traditional and simplified Chinese characters and cultural contexts in Taiwan and China. I also use living documents, primary resources, and apply feminist scholarships to emphasize female authorship in art history. The tables in the Appendix section systematically present the data from accredited resources to reveal patterns, trends, and meanings.

Content analysis is my research tool for qualitative data. I apply content analysis to determine specific keywords or concepts within these qualitative data (including curatorial concepts, exhibition artworks, for instance). The process summarizes and interprets the information when perceiving a body of abstract texts, such as curatorial statements or artists' creative ideas. My research also includes cross-examination of both art biennials within historical, political, and socio-economic contexts. One advantage of using the content analysis method is to process the data and archival materials systemically.

4. Chapters Organization

This dissertation contains five chapters in addition to the Introduction and Conclusion. The Introduction section outlines the research background, topic, questions, literature review, methods, and chapter organization. Chapter One presents theoretical frameworks, including David Graeber's value theory, Arjun Appadurai's notion of globalization, Rey Chow's problematizing "Chineseness," John and Jean Comaroff's research on cultural identity with market value, Joseph Nye's soft-power theory, and Pierre Bourdieu's notion of Cultural Capital.

Chapter Two traces the art biennials' historical backgrounds and reviews the geopolitical meanings of the first two longest-running art biennials – the Venice Biennial in Italy and the Bienal de São Paulo in Brazil – along with the art biennials' global proliferation and Asian wave. My research further examines the historical backgrounds of the Taipei Biennial and the Shanghai Biennale, and reviews how the contemporary art scene emerged in different social and political environments in Taiwan and China.

Chapters Three and Four emphasize the geopolitical meanings in art practices at the Shanghai Biennale and the Taipei Biennial. These two chapters review significant curatorial concepts and how these two art biennials choose international curators for their geopolitical mapping in the global art scene. I chose the artwork by Taiwanese artists in the Taipei Biennial and Chinese artists in the Shanghai Biennale to reveal the geopolitical meanings in these socially engaged visual art and cultural practices, and the differences and similarities of these contemporary art practices.

Chapter Five surveys the art biennial's female curatorship, applying female scholars' insights on female authorship in art knowledge production, including Carol Duncan's insights on museum and art display, Linda Nochlin's research on female artists, Whitney Chadwick's scholarship on art history and women's her-stories, for example. This chapter includes interviews with the Taipei Biennial's Taiwanese female curators and features their life-long dedication to art knowledge production. This interdisciplinary research aims to contribute to a diverse cultural archive.

In this dissertation, I use the official name of each art biennial. For example, the Taipei Biennial and the Shanghai Biennale. While referring to the art biennials and other reoccurring periodical mega-exhibitions in general, I use "Biennial," instead of "Biennale." To avoid confusion that some Chinese and Taiwanese artists put their family names before their given names, I capitalize each artist's family name in the headings of the illustrations. The original themes of each Taipei Biennial and Shanghai Biennale are listed in the tables in English and Chinese, including traditional and simplified characters used in Taiwan and China. I use "China" to refer to the "mainland China" that does not include Taiwan.

CHAPTER ONE:

Theoretical Framework

Traditionally, the art historian, by examining the artistic material culture, is the one who reifies the artistic value based on one's visual literacy and cultural knowledge to interpret, negotiate, and make meaning of the image. However, uncritically representing women as objects in the artwork was a common visual practice in art history for centuries, is now considered chauvinist by showing the world only through the male gaze from predominantly male artists. The Feminist Art movement has challenged to rewrite the art history instead of merely "his story" (e.g., Nochlin 1971, Chadwick 1990, Chow 1993, Duncan 1995). But today, the construction of artistic value is more complicated than the male gaze. In today's globalized world, what defines "art" and cultural value? This question requires interdisciplinary approaches to undo the complex value construction.

Scholars analyze the concept of "value" from various approaches. Karl Marx argues that the value of the commodity is derived from human labor, intelligence, and creative energy.²⁹ Human labor could be evaluated in two ways – with an exchange value based on market relations or a use-value based on human needs (Marx 1867, 35-40). By contrast, economist Adam Smith posits that people in a free market would do their best to pursue and maximize monetary value because of human profit motivation. However,

²⁹ The Marx's theory of value emphasizes human labor, based on the idea that value emerging from consciousness (intelligence) and action (a person's invisible "potency," the capacity to act) transformed into a concrete, perceptible form (Marx 1867).

what about the art biennial exhibition seeking a particular value not based on economic profit? The following section applies Bourdieu's cultural capital theory to explore the art biennial's cultural and social values.

1. Applying Pierre Bourdieu's Theory on the Art Biennial

1.1 Cultural Capital

Bourdieu expands Marx's notion of capital and posits that cultural capital is beyond the material aspect. Social reality can be viewed in multiple abstract fields: social stratification comprises various hierarchical fields (Bourdieu 1993, 114). Cultural capital plays a crucial role in distinguishing different social classes and creating a social hierarchy. The lack of specific cultural capital prevents cultural understanding among different classes. Conversely, cultural capital has the power to unify communities. Analyzing social inequalities in terms of economic capital alone is insufficient; the abstract form of capital must be taken into consideration. According to Bourdieu, class stratification is divided by those who possess more monetary and cultural capital than those deprived in these capitals (Bourdieu 1993).

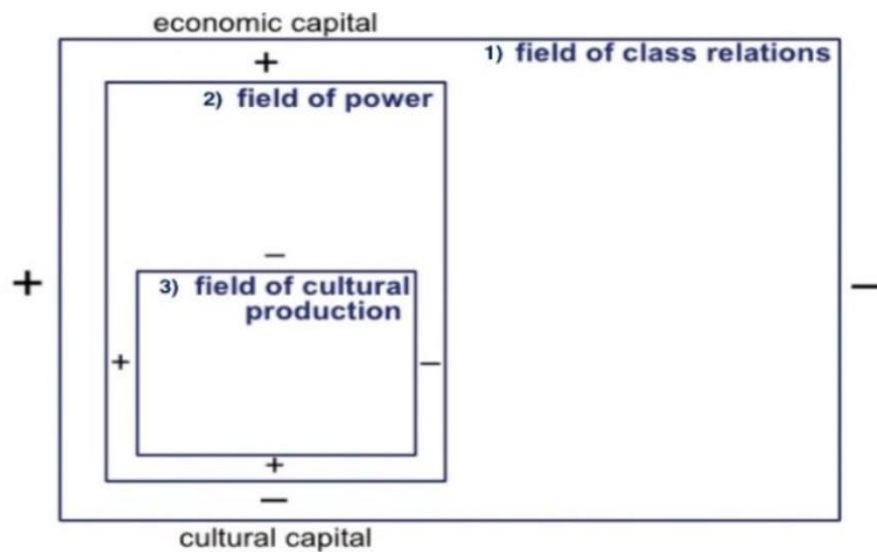
Cultural capital is a set of orientations, preferences, and abilities (whether skills or education) that are consciously acquired and unconsciously inherited throughout one's life (Bourdieu 1993). Cultural capital takes on three forms: the embodied state, the objectified state, and the institutionalized state. The embodied state refers to capital in the form of knowledge that resides within us. The objectified state refers to material objects we use to indicate social class. We tend to assign a social class based on a person possessing certain material items (such as houses, expensive cars, or art collections) that

symbolize the collector's taste. Bourdieu posits that, although tastes appear to be innate, they are socially conditioned and reflect the dominant societal power relations (Bourdieu 1987). Bourdieu also argues that aesthetic dispositions, or our "tastes," are nurtured in early life when family members shape a child's cognitive sensibility, education, and surroundings. In this sense, "taste" functions as a sort of social orientation, a sense of one's place guiding the person of a given space in a social structure. As addressed above, cultural capital is an element merging or dividing social groups and cultural understanding: "It [taste] implies a practical anticipation of what the social meaning and value of the chosen practice or thing will probably be, given their distribution in social space and the practical knowledge the other agents have of the correspondence between goods and groups" (Bourdieu 1987, 466-67). Therefore, "taste" is a form of embodied cultural capital. The institutionalized state refers to how society measures cultural capital, such as our education credentials or artists' exhibition records. Cultural capital is not about money but about cultural knowledge, social networking, and cultural influences that can be exchanged for economic values. More capital equals more opportunities and social rewards.

The motivation for making art is generally a need for self-expression and creativity. An independent curator organizes an exhibition, or an avant-garde artist creates art by investing one's money, time, energy, and labor – such investment is mainly not for monetary profit – a disinterested economic act (Bourdieu 1993,71). To maximize economic profit is not the primary cause for artistic production; there are other ways to gain money more effectively. Therefore, considering the artistic value, we must consider other forms of capital: cultural, symbolic, and social capital.

Chart 1 represents Bourdieu's model: the field of cultural production is organized around two competing principles: economic capital and cultural capital. The negative and positive areas in each field represent the distribution of cultural and economic capital. In Bourdieu's chart, the artistic field is situated in a dominant position of the overall social structure (Bourdieu 1993, 38). It possesses a higher level of symbolic capital, but it can be also in a less dominant position with less economic capital.

Chart 1. The fields within fields of cultural production (Bourdieu 1993).



The art biennial can be seen as a field of cultural production. Applying Bourdieu's model, the artists' and curator's participating in art biennials share a higher symbolic capital level, despite their lack of financial resources. When an artist joins a prestigious exhibition, the exhibition serves as an institutional approval to the artist. The status of an established artist is achieved through a series of aesthetic validations, including joining important exhibitions and being a member of important art movements.

1.2 Symbolic Capital

Symbolic capital is a form of public legitimacy, prestige, or merit. Symbolic capital could be a reputation, good public image, and honorability that is easily converted into political positions or respectful social status (Bourdieu 1993). An artist's exhibition record is their symbolic capital, which integrates cultural capital and social capital. Being invited to the art biennial event, to an artist, has its symbolic meaning – the honor of artistic legitimacy. Artists and curators appear to be more interested in art than in profit; however, if their social conditions are right, they will gain enough reputation to convert it to money at the right time. Because reputation could be converted to monetary value, symbolic capital also functions as a tangible form of economic capital. In this sense, the cultural branding of “contemporary Chinese art” creates symbolic, cultural, and economic capital in the global art market.

Bourdieu's model further explains the hierarchical relations of the avant-garde, the consecrated avant-garde, and the rear-garde. Applying Bourdieu's theory, an avant-garde artist is an active agent in artistic production; their artworks or curatorial practices challenge the preexisting aesthetic standard. Although the avant-garde artists might be limited in economic capital, their creative talents could move them upward in the cultural sphere. At the beginning of their career, avant-garde artists gain recognition within the field. They tried to overturn the norm and put effort into their transgressive practices. Eventually, their art practices are recognized and become legitimate art value. With sufficient exhibition records and recognition, the artist could become a member of the consecrated avant-garde.

The consecrated avant-garde artist is in a position of receiving a higher volume of symbolic capital. This consecrated avant-garde position reflects that the artist has devoted a significant amount of time and effort to the field of art production, instead of spending the time and effort for monetary gain. This disinterest in money is now seen as evidence of this artist's pure motivation for art: a good reputation and cultural capital.

When artists move from the avant-garde position to the consecrated avant-garde position, they gain a higher level of symbolic capital and have more opportunities to join prestigious exhibitions. For instance, the art biennials' participating artists or curators receive a prominent institutional recognition; their aesthetic preferences are accepted and valued highly in the mainstream art world.

In the field of artistic production, the consecrated avant-garde can be seen as the legitimate and most accepted artistic value. Therefore, the consecrated avant-garde secures its reproduction and eventually becomes the canon within art institutions. The consecrated avant-garde artists' aesthetic value would also be convertible to a stabilized art market value. Meanwhile, a newer generation of curators and artists continually emerge, occupy the avant-garde position, and challenge the consecrated avant-garde values. When the newer avant-garde attains recognition and takes over the place of consecrated avant-garde, the outdated consecrated avant-garde descends to the rear-garde position.

In Bourdieu's theory, social capital and cultural capital can be converted to economic capital. Social capital refers to a durable social network, professional connections, institutionalized relationships, or membership in a particular group. Social capital can be built by participating in specific social networks. An institutional credential

is also associated with social capital because the certification represents the institution's approval, which assigns with a collectivity-owned capital (Bourdieu 1987). In this sense, the contemporary art scene relies on the underlying social networks and on the circulation of aesthetic value. Artists and curators participating in an art biennial exhibition are gaining various forms of symbolic, social, and cultural capital. The art biennial becomes a site of cultural production for shared values circulating in the contemporary global art scene.

2. David Graeber's Insights on Value Theories

Graeber argues that cultural comparison projects are essentially revolutionary. He integrates the insights of Karl Marx and Marcel Mauss, two intellectual figures with exceedingly different viewpoints of values. Unlike Karl Marx's historical materialism, French sociologist Marcel Mauss's research on the gift economy explores the reciprocity and gift exchange to build up value systems in some societies. In the so-called archaic societies, the reciprocal exchange between people or groups centers around the obligations to give, receive, and, most importantly, reciprocate. The act of exchanging objects between different groups builds up their social relationships.

Graeber emphasizes that people would take action to get what they think is valuable. In *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value* (2001), Graeber reviews different ways of theorizing values, including sociology, economics, and linguistics methods. "Value" in a sociological sense depends on what is suitable and desirable in a person's social life; Value in the economic sense is about "supply" and "demand," measured in terms of how much would people give up to get the desired object; Value in

a linguistic sense is based on Ferdinand de Saussure's "meaningful difference"—the meaning of things is based on the differences between them.³⁰

Synthesizing the above value systems with an anthropological approach, Graeber posits that "value" is originated from the "meaning of life" (Graeber 2001, 3). He elaborates:

For human beings, the meaning is a matter of comparison. Parts take on meaning in relation to each other, and that process always involves reference to some sort of whole: whether it be a matter of words in a language, or "goods and services" on the market. So too for value. The realization of value is always, a process of comparison; for this reason, it always implies an at least imagined audience (Graeber 2001, 86-87).

From the perspective of Graeber, the complex meanings of Taiwan's geopolitical "value" deserve further exploration. General McArthur described Taiwan as the unsinkable aircraft carrier for the US (or for China, if, unfortunately, China invaded Taiwan), evaluated Taiwan as possessing potential national interests and values for the American naval forces in the Pacific; he has envisioned today's crucial Indo-Pacific regional maritime security. Applying Graeber's theorization, the notion of value implies the conceptions of the desirable; that is, ideas about what humans need. Values are concepts, the abstract criteria by which people judge what is worthy of taking risks for the desired object, be that materials or conceptual objects such as national pride, social status, fame, honor, personal belief, religious virtue, art, and cultural value. These values of abstract things can enhance one's upward social mobility. Essentially, values are socially constructed because "structures of relation with others come to be internalized

³⁰ Structuralism attributes value to abstract categories such as social status, artistic value, taste; and these categories make up a larger code of meaning.

into the fabric of our being” (Graeber 2001, 260). Therefore, Taiwan’s cultural values are shaped with different intricate forces beyond local elements, and include various global systems and power dynamics. To evaluate the failure or success of the Taipei Biennial achieving international goals, it is crucial to recognize the broader structure that the event situates on the global art biennial’s map: geographically, the Taipei Biennial locates adjacent to the Shanghai Biennale in the Chinese-speaking regions in the Far East; but conceptually, there are complex global disjunctive values flowing through art biennial internationally. Moreover, the island that nurtures the Taipei Biennial has also encountered tremendous international political tensions and power relations that are greater than the merely artistic competition.

Graeber theorizes that value implies comparison, and when we evaluate something, we create imaginary totalities to choose what makes life worth living (Graeber 2001, 88). It is more challenging to find a universal standard to evaluate the same thing and get the same answer in today’s disjunctive globalized and digitized era because the value systems are more fragmented and seem to be endlessly evolving and transforming. Therefore, evaluating the profound meanings of these Sinophone art biennials demands interdisciplinary frameworks.

3. Applying Rey Chow’s Problematizing Chineseness

Since the 1990s, the rise and turbulence of China’s economy have attracted international investors’ attention to contemporary Chinese art. Auction records indicate that China has become the second-largest economy in the art market, above the UK and under the US (Chart 2). Contemporary Chinese artists’ works are gaining higher market

value in the auction houses, including Christie's, Sotheby's, and Philip's. Furthermore, two newly established auction houses in China, the Poly Beijing and the China Guardian, also ambitiously expand their business on international art collections. With China's growing economy and the increasing number of Chinese collectors, "contemporary Chinese art" has become a brand name in the global art market. In "Experiencing the Brand, Branding the Experience," Jayson Beaster-Jones explores that branding is not just building a recognizable label, but can also incorporate (and manage) the consumers' experiences to add marketing values and promote sales. Branding layers another set of values and meanings onto commodities (Beaster-Jones 2016, 108). In the case of "contemporary Chinese art," this cultural branding embeds certain narratives to attract collectors through cultural stories and the marketing process. To reveal what kind of the story is circulating in the market, the following section unpacks the complex connotations of "contemporary Chinese art" in historical and social contexts.

In 1993, art critics Li Xianting and Achille Bonito Oliva invited fourteen Chinese avant-garde artists for the 45th Venice Biennale; their art forms were later realized as *Political Pop* and *Cynical Realism*. In the same year, many contemporary Chinese art exhibitions appeared around the globe: *Mao Goes Pop* in Sydney, *China Avant-Garde* in Berlin, *Silent Energy* in England, and *Fragmented Memory* in Ohio in the US (Debevoise 2014). These exhibitions promoted "contemporary Chinese art," which refers to non-traditional art from China. In the late 1990s, artworks from Cynical Realism and Political Pop movements began to emerge and sold at a high price in the global art market (Chloe Preece 2014, 29).

In terms of Political Pop and Cynical Realism, artists often sarcastically take political icons out of original political contexts (Jiang 2008, Gao 2011, Pollack 2018). For example, Wang Guangyi's "Great Criticism – Coca-Cola" (1994) adopts the Cultural Revolution poster and juxtaposes the Coca-Cola logo to create a new message.³¹ This mocking gesture seems to go against communist ideology and reinforces the Western notion of capitalistic value, as Chloe Preece's research explores: "In the case of Political Pop and Cynical Realism, the art was framed and packaged by the art world to reflect Western liberal political thinking in terms of personal expression thereby implicitly justifying Western democratic, capitalist values" (Preece 2014, 25).

"Contemporary Chinese art" serves as a convenient market brand for global consumption with a compelling story soliciting buyers' interests in the artistic style. Many contemporary Chinese art exhibitions' descriptions and auction reports begin with the artists' connections with the Cultural Revolution, as China witnessed the emergence of avant-garde art groups in the post-Revolution years trying to push the predominant communist art domain (Jiang 2008, 12). However, the term "contemporary Chinese art" hinted at the sense of politicized Chineseness related to Chairman Mao's personality cult that helps create a brand's image. These artworks create a myth for the avant-garde artists' rebellious practice against a totalitarian regime; a "contemporary Chinese art" myth emphasizes Chinese artists' struggles for freedom of self-expression. But by the same token, Political Pop and Cynical Realism continue the myth of Chairman Mao's influence: "The brand's power is found in its role as a storyteller or myth-maker which allows it to connect with the identity projects of consumers; customers buy the product to

³¹ Tate Modern, "Political Pop." *The Tate Museum, UK*. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/political-pop>.

experience the stories” (Preece 2014, 27). The myth adds value to their artworks, as if contemporary Chinese artists constantly fight against the state’s thought-control even several decades after the Cultural Revolution. Compellingly, three contemporary Chinese artists’ works broke the auction record in 2019, and these three artists belong to Political Pop and Cynical Realism. Their record-breaking artworks include the following: Liu Xiaodong’s *Communist Leader*, which sold \$6,659,000 as the top 21; Leng Jun’s *View of the World No.3*, which sold \$6,330,000 as the top 25; Zhou Chunya’s *Chinese Landscape*, which sold \$6,142,500 as the top 26 (Artprice 2019).

There are numerous reasons for international art patrons’ interests and investing in contemporary Chinese artworks, but Preece breaks down the art market’s branding mechanism:

These brands have identity value as they are valued for what they symbolise, in the case of Cynical Realism and Political Pop, the myth centres around Western discourses of China in terms of its Communist and Socialist history satisfying contemporary sentiments among the post- or anti-communist 1968 generation. The brand functions as a symbolic device through which consumers can buy into this ideology and identity thus enabling them to make sense of their place in the world and share in the power of the work’s authority (Preece 2014, 35).

Collecting art also shapes cultural and artistic values. In “On Collecting Art and Culture,” James Clifford posits that private collection implies the motivations behind what and why certain artifacts are being collected and, at the same time, inherits the authority of representation. Clifford emphasizes that the act of collecting is “an exercise in how to make the world one’s own... Collecting—at least in the West, where time is generally thought to be linear and irreversible—implies a rescue of phenomena from inevitable historical decay or loss” (Clifford 2002, 218, 231). Collecting and owning artworks and cultural objects compensate nostalgia and longing for certain stories behind

the artworks. Svetlana Boym also argues that the collection reflects personal re-fashioning of the past, the imagined homelands, and the reinvented traditions (Boym 2001). Both scholars' assessment on the act of collecting support that the artwork's market value is related to collectors' preferences.

Certain artwork's rising market record indicates the international collectors' increasing interest in specific historical moments and the stories delivered through the artwork. The "need" for collection and consumption, as Jean Baudrillard demystifies, is rooted in the uncompensated curiosity, a denial of pleasure that inspires the "need" (Baudrillard 1968). For instance, to persuade a female customer to buy facial products involves reminding her of her lack of fairer skin. The advertisement constructs a fantasy to compensate for this lack by owning the promotional beauty product to achieve their dreams; consumers imagine that owning this product would make them more attractive or successful. The utility of a commodity is created by the producers, the artists, the advertisements, and the art market mechanism. The advertisements persuade the customers to believe in a pair of Jimmy Choo shoes with the magic social power, and the numbers of the stock market reflect our economic success.

"Contemporary Chinese art" is a complex label categorized by the global art market. The rising price of contemporary Chinese artwork reflects the marketing mechanism and collectors' growing interests in China's avant-garde art practices after the Revolution (e.g., Jiang 2008, Preece 2014). Recent examples include two collection-exhibitions in major museums in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2018: Berkeley Art Museum's *Mahjong: Contemporary Chinese Art from the Sigg Collection* and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's *Half-life of a Dream* (Logan family's Chinese art

collection). Both represented museums' choices and collectors' preferences on Chinese art, mostly Political Pop and Cynical Realism.³² Incorporating the above theories on "collection," collecting these contemporary Chinese artworks by a group of artists visually playing with China's communist political icons is an enjoyable process to easier consume the stories through this cultural branding.

However, the implied "Chineseness" in "contemporary Chinese art" is questionable. Chow problematizes "Chineseness" and examines how ethnic groups are reduced to symbols or signs. In analyzing the concept of "Chineseness," she challenges the prevailing assumptions about ethnic groups and cultural identity. In her book *Writing diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*, Chow first questions some assumptions in Sinology between the thin line of cultural translation and cultural representation, the act of presenting cultural objects in another culture. She uses Sinologist Stephen Owen's controversial review of Bei Dao's poetry as an example of her concerns about why Chineseness is ethnically significant to Sinology: "Owen attacks 'third world' poets for pandering to the tastes of Western audiences seeking 'a cozy identity' ... Much of what written by non-Western poets is, he complains, no longer distinguished by a true national ID but is instead 'supremely translatable'" (Chow 1993, 1). Chow alerts that multicultural issues demand to be contextualized, instead of being essentialized. Cultural translation and criticism should not exploit the native and regional culture; because "the native" is never simply "native" (Chow 1993, 30). Without cross-

³² See William Poy Lee. "Anti-Revolutionary Art: The Sigg Collection Tracks the Rise of Chinese Modernism." *San Francisco Bay Guardian*. July 26, 2008.

cultural understanding or sensitivity, “cultural criticism” between a more powerful culture to judge the marginal ones might cause inappropriate interpretation.

How is “Chineseness” problematic? Chow applies Martin Heidegger’s theory of visualism to explore how diverse groups of people are constructed by visual (mis)assumptions and abstraction, being reduced to a stereotype (Chow 1993). In “The Age of the World Picture,” Heidegger conceptualizes how technology defines modernity; technology draws and manages nature rather than reflecting it. One fundamental element of the modern age is viewing the world as a picture under scientific lenses (Heidegger 1977). Because of advanced technology in modern society, humans create scientific pictures to study the world and represent it as a flat image so that scientists can manage and analyze it. Heidegger further examines how everything is being conceived as a picture in the modern world, and how humans rely on technology to define modernity: “The fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture. The word ‘picture’ now means the structured image that is the creature of man’s producing which represents and sets before” (Heidegger 1977, 133). As technology advances, humans use technological apparatuses to measure the world as a scientific picture. However, the risk is that humans (as part of the world) are also reduced to flat images or stereotypes.

Further examining how ethnic groups are constructed by visual (mis)assumptions and abstraction, Chow develops a “diasporic consciousness” to understand China. Similar to the stereotype of “the other,” which stays on the super-flat façade, the idea of “Chineseness” reduces individuality and classifies a group of people into a symbol. Chow further analyzes the notion of “Chineseness,” a term imposed by two folds of cultural

hegemony: firstly, China's authority centralizes and highlights Han culture as a homogenous cultural identity. Secondly, in the diasporic context, the West distinguishes Chinese within the "otherness." In modern Chinese history, foreign powers have not fully colonized mainland China (unlike Hong Kong by British Empire or Taiwan by Japan). This "absence of the enemy" has accelerated China's internal colonization. Imposed by the Chinese authority, the collective image and cultural identity are "institutional investments that shape [our own] enunciation" (Chow 1993, 2). Chow's examination echoes Edward Said's postcolonial theory. "Chineseness" could be seen as a product of both the West or China's cultural imperialism work insidiously as "dominant culture(s), through economic, ideological, military or political means, subjectively leading the discourse of the colonized culture... The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging" (Said 1994, xiii). The collective image of Chineseness determines a group of people sharing a "Chinese" stereotype, a form of visual violence that reduces each individual's unique existence.

Though branding the art movement as a recognizable category is common in the global art market, the implied connotation of "contemporary Chinese art" eliminates each artist's traits and aesthetics. The term "contemporary," to Western art scholarship, often refers to the period in the last two or three decades. However, according to art historian Michael Sullivan in his book *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, "contemporary" refers to the period from 1979 when China's economic Open-Door Policy took shape and an avant-garde art group The Stars' first exhibition in Beijing (Sullivan 1996). In the art market, the cultural branding of "Contemporary Chinese art" implies specific ideology and overshadows the significance of contemporary art from

Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, or Xinjiang. Such cultural branding and marketing, as I discussed in the previous collector's section, reflects a certain degree of an imagined story about the communist China. But contemporary Taiwanese artwork presents different cultural and political stories. Though speaking the same language (Mandarin Chinese) as their Chinese counterparts, Taiwanese artists do not have communist China's social and political experiences (such as the Cultural Revolution or the Great Leap Forward). Taiwanese have various historical, social, and political experiences that are not the same as Chinese issues. The contemporary art scene in Taiwan evolves from a separate path than in China, as Taiwan has a unique geopolitical stance and cultural formation after World War II. As Wang examines, the US government promoted "American ideals" through art events "to help educate a nation-state struggling to establish its own identity after centuries of colonial rule by other nations, including as a Japanese colony between 1895 and 1945" (Wang 2020, 5). In contrast, China under the Chinese Communist Party's rule was banning American ideology during the Cold War.

Although Taiwan has traditional Chinese cultural influence, people in Taiwan politically self-identify as Taiwanese (*xin Taiwanren*), a discourse rising from the former president Lee Teng-hui administration in the post-martial-law era (Vickers 2008, 73). The complex identity politics embedded in the term "contemporary Chinese art" often troubles Sinophone artists in international exhibitions. The implied "Chineseness" could diminishes each artist's individuality and unique style. As such, "Chineseness" cannot encompasses diverse cultural performances in Chinese-speaking regions, such as artists from Taiwan or Hong Kong or ethnic minorities in China. Therefore, these artists often self-identify as "Taiwanese" or "Hongkongers" to reassert their individuality, artistic

authenticity, and cultural autonomy. This self-identification is more than a political gesture resisting the hegemonic Chineseness or against communist China, but demonstrates fluid cultural realities: “Part of the goal of ‘writing diaspora’ is to unlearn...and not submission to one’s ethnicity” (Chow 1993, 25). Chow proposes a “diasporic consciousness” — embracing the displacement as an empowering tactic — to Taiwanese, Hongkongers, and overseas Chinese communities.

4. John and Jean Comaroff on Ethnicity as Incorporation

Under global capitalism, everything can be commoditized, including cultural identity. In *Ethnicity, Inc.*, John and Jean Comaroff firstly interrogate the nature of culture: ethnicity is built on cultural practices and cultural identity. They analyze ethnicity as the ethnic ontology in sociological contexts with the identity, subjectivity, and “selfhood of the nation-state self-imagining in the twenty-first century” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, 22). In John and Jean Comaroff’s research, cultural identity can be self-built through choices, imagination, and the manifestation of human connection and consumption. Their fieldwork on how Bafokeng Enterprise copyrighted local culture is an example of tribe-into-corporation. These ethnic identities, especially the native culture, are also the “heritage” and intellectual property for local people. Comaroff and Comaroff explore how ethnicity can be packaged for a new model of cultural industry in the twenty-first century. They trace the earlier history and discover: “Modern colonial missions almost everywhere sought to make diverse others into ethnic subjects through objects. With the turn of the twenty-first century, however, we seem to have entered a phase in which otherness is not transacted only as trophy, talisman, souvenir, or

subjection. Identity is increasingly claimed as property by its living heirs” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, 29). These cultural groups are adding their ethnic identities to the marketing process; as a result, their cultural identities are gaining marketing values.

John and Jean Comaroff’s ethnographic work explore how different groups promote ethnic cultures and package them with tourism. For example, the San Bushmen in South Africa, the Zulu ethnic-theme park, Maori in New Zealand, Cajuns in Louisiana, Native Americans in the southeastern U.S., Scotland’s efforts to build its cultural brand name. These cultural brandings and integrating ethnic values with the market economy are similar to the “contemporary Chinese art” in the global art marketing system; the ethnicity creates various cultural commodities with a taste of unique ethnic flavor.

The incorporation of identity sometimes can be a “positive mechanism in the pursuit of authenticity,” Comaroff and Comaroff call this commodifying local culture as “identity economy” (2009, 9). More artifacts from around the world are no longer considered primitive; what was known as “tribal art” has now been restated by native people as the *objets d’art*, including the display of the native American artifacts in the Metropolitan Museum as American art,³³ and Taiwan’s indigenous museums and cultural centers that emerged in the post-martial law era.

Borrowing Comaroff and Comaroff’s finding to review “contemporary Chinese art” as a cultural brand in the market, we can see that artists repackage cultural memories – such as the Cultural Revolution – in Political Pop and Cynical Realism. Emphasizing Chinese cultural identity and combining it with market value is common in China’s

³³ See “Native American Treasures Head to the Met, This Time as American Art.” Randy Kennedy. *New York Times*, 2017 April 6th.

unique authoritarian political system and yet neoliberal economy. One example is how China's government merges domestic cultural industries with tourism and sets up the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to attract international capital. Another case is the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rolling out the Confucius Institutes (CI) internationally as China's cultural heritage and intellectual property. The CCP funds the Confucius Institutes by re-fashioning Chinese culture with market values and political agenda, despite the same communist regime purging of Confucius values and destroying traditional Chinese cultural treasures on a grand scale during the Cultural Revolution. These emerging Confucius Institutes in universities around the globe are also dubbed as the "Trojan horses with Chinese characteristics" (Steven Mosher 2012). The CI's global expansion targets not only Western universities but also Latin American campuses: "...the increasing presence of the Chinese government is highlighted by Instituto Confucio (Confucius Institute) of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Peru" (Ignacio López-Calvo 2014, 12). In the essay "China's Presence in Cuba and Its Cultural Production," Ignacio López-Calvo adds, "Confucius Institutes in Latin America and other regions, which are supposed to be tasked only with teaching and promoting Chinese language and culture, have been seen as a tool for expanding Chinese political influence through the soft power of cultural activities" (López-Calvo 2018). The number of the Confucius Institutes in the US, according to the Congressional Research Service Reports (2021), was 103 and nearly 550 globally in 2017. Since 2020, the exact number of the CI is hard to estimate because the PRC government has renamed the CI to "Hanban"

(meaning: the Chinese Language Classroom in Mandarin) or “the Center for Language Education and Cooperation.”³⁴

5. Arjun Appadurai’s Value Theory and Globalization

Arjun Appadurai revises Marx’s notion of commodity value and re-emphasizes on the possibility of a “commodity phase in the social life of a thing” (Appadurai 1988, 13). Focusing on the thing/commodity itself, Appadurai studies the commodity’s value circulating through different cultural spheres: “We have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, and their trajectories” (Appadurai 1986, 5). Being a “commodity” is one of many roles that the thing plays; the thing tends to oscillate between commodity status and other roles available within a cultural value system, such as gifts or artworks not for sale. Beaster-Jones examines the trajectory of music production and further explores: “Even items produced in a capitalist system with the exclusive intention of being sold, have a tendency to escape from their intended market roles and take on another social meaning—which then have an evolving effect on their market value” (Beaster-Jones 2016, 183). Similarly, the trajectory of an object’s artistic value can move beyond the market system to a not-for-sale state, such as staying in the artist’s studio or displaying in a non-profit, prestigious art exhibition. Following the social life of the artwork, we can observe how the artistic value is produced and circulated through its social connections with the exhibition and the

³⁴ See The Congressional Research Reports, “Confucius Institutes in the United States,” Congressional Research Service. December 2, 2021.

market. A thing produced in the artist's studio can play various roles as an artwork, a commodity, or a gift – depending on which social function is assigned, the thing acquires various social, cultural, political, economic, and artistic values.

Viewing the art biennial's global proliferation in the context of globalization, I borrow Appadurai's notion of globalization in "five-scapes": ethnoscape, technoscape, financescape mediascape, and ideoscapes (Appadurai 1990, 297). Respectively, they represent the complicated and rapid flow of people/migration, machinery/technology, money, images/mediation, and ideas. Appadurai uses "scapes" to describe the landscapes and imagined worlds. The term "scape" allows us to envision the fluid, irregular shapes of these conceptual landscapes and cross-boundary flows. All these five scapes can be inter-related and deeply disjunctive. Such disjuncture has become the essence of the global culture. In *Globalization* (2001), Appadurai compares his book with *The Cultures of Globalization* (Jameson and Miyoshi ed., 1998). Most authors in Appadurai edited version are not from academic circles in the US; but artists, photographers, cartographers, or writers outside of North America. In the book *Globalization*, Leo Ching uses regionalism to reject Western universalism. He points out the ambiguous position of Japan with the West and within Asia. Comparing and contrasting East Asia modernity with the West, his essay corresponds to Appadurai's mediascape and ideoscapes in global as well as in regional studies. Another author Wu Hung's essay in this book studies artist Wang Jin's art installation, *A Chinese Dream* in various settings. Wu Hung explores this artwork's artistic value with monetary value circulating from the art studio to exhibition, to the auction house. Zhang Zhen writes from a feminist perspective and introduces Chinese urban vocabulary invented by the post-1989 new generations that grew up after

Deng Xiaoping's economic reformation. The title of her essay "The Rice Bowl of Youth" refers to more female professionals taking upper-level professions in urban China, a new social phenomenon drawing on female empowerment and upward mobility.

Following Appadurai's notion of globalization, I would also argue that the international art biennials are composed of a group of frequent traveling art professionals (ethnoscapes), artistic technology transmission (technoscape), cross-institutional cooperation (mediascape), creative ideas (ideoscapes), and art patrons' capital flows (financescapes). The art biennials' global proliferation and artistic exchanges have brought various adaptations and fusions of "glocal" art history. Sociologist Roland Robertson uses "glocalization" to describe the process of interacting and remixing global and regional cultural elements and the hybrid effects (Robertson 2018, 5). In this sense, the Taipei Biennial recruits international and local curators and artists; their collective work in the Biennial generates hybrid cultural impacts on the viewers' experiences.

6. Applying Joseph Nye's Soft-Power Theory on Cultural Production

Joseph Nye posits that soft power refers to a state's ability to obtain preferable outcomes through interacting with other states by attraction rather than military coercion: "Because the use of force has become costly, less threatening forms of power have grown increasingly attractive" (Nye 1990, 168). Compared with "authority," "soft power" can convince and compel people to take action and shape others' preferences. In Nye's research, there are different soft power strategies other than military force to attract diplomatic allies, such as technology, economic growth, education, and cultural industries. Culture embodies a set of values and activities that create meanings for a

society; hence culture is a vital element of a country's soft power (Nye 2004). For example, Hollywood movies deliver American lifestyle with the images of a liberal and prosperous society; advertising American goods is selling more than the products but also American culture. These are the exercise of soft power—the power of persuasion through ideas, images, and cultural productions to attract international audiences with American values. In the case of art biennials, these international exhibitions are also cultural productions with public displays and configurations of various cultural elements that attract international viewers. In this sense, the Taipei Biennial joining the global art biennial arena has a position to showcase Taiwan's cultural soft power.

To increase diplomatic space beyond Taiwan's precarious sovereignty, Taiwan's government adopts a soft power strategy, particularly Taiwan is a nation-state that has not been officially recognized by its biggest ally, the US (Cummings 2003, Tucker 2008). Wang examines the USIS-Taipei exhibitions in Taiwan, and finds “the promotion by the US government of ‘American ideals’ through the deployment of ‘soft power’—specifically the arts, a ‘universally recognized means of cultural communication’...such deployment of soft power in promoting American art and culture in foreign countries under the moniker of American democracy is illustrative of the US cultural diplomatic operations in Taiwan” (Wang 2020, 5). The US began to apply soft-power influence on Taiwan's cultural formation in the post-WWII era, and Taiwan's government has adopted a democratic system since the 1990s. These are a few causes for Taiwan's contemporary cultural activities being dynamic and diverse. Taiwan has transformed into a liberal society, different from China under the communist party's rule, and more in aligning with democratic ideals that promote cultural pluralism and religious freedom.

But China has its national agenda to “reunify” Taiwan and increases military drills across the Taiwan Strait.³⁵ As a result, Taiwan continues to develop digital and cultural soft power to connect with international communities: “Innovation has been a source of comparative advantage for Taiwan historically. It has also been an important basis for US firms, investors, and government to support Taiwan’s development while expanding mutually beneficial linkages” (Feigenbaum 2020). To a geographic much smaller political entity, soft power is more effective than expensive military costs to enacted with international communities at a certain level. In the essay “Cultural Policy and Governance: Reviewing Policies Related to Cultural and Creative Industries Implemented by the Central Government of Taiwan between 2002 and 2012,” CB Lee studies the Central Government of Taiwan (CGT) promoting local cultural and creative industries. Lee finds a report by Taiwan’s Council for Economic Planning and Development that addresses the fact that “in 2002, the CGT initiated the Challenge 2008: National Development Plan focusing on administrative policies toward cultural and creative industries. The CGT has identified cultural and creative industries relevant to fifteen industry categories in the arts and culture, media, design, and digital content divisions” (2015, 466). In addition, Taiwan’s Ministry of Culture has launched a Global Outreach Plan promoting Taiwanese talents to join international cultural activities (MCT 2013). Through Nye’s lenses, Taiwan’s arts and cultural events operate as a cultural soft power that aims to boost the island’s international relations. The Taipei Biennial started as a domestic biennial exhibition from 1992 to 1996 and expanded to an

³⁵ Paul B. Stares, "Conflicts to Watch in 2021," *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 14, 2021. <https://www.cfr.org/report/conflicts-watch-2021>

international scale in 1998, showcasing Taiwan's contemporary cultural production for global audiences.

Across the Taiwan Strait, China's economic Open Door Policy has brought out unprecedented international business and financial growth, the contemporary art scene also gains more opportunities for cultural exchanges. With the international art patrons' growing interests in contemporary Chinese art, China's government adjusted its policy from restraining avant-garde art movements to adopting them for national soft-power strategy (O'Connor and Gu 2006, Tu 2018). China's cultural policy has turned around to embrace "contemporary Chinese art" and build an international stage, the Shanghai Biennale. Promoted by the state and Shanghai municipal government, the Shanghai Biennale also created a transnational stage for artists across the globe since 1996, four years after the first Taipei Biennial.

CHAPTER TWO:

The Globalized Art Biennial

1. A Critical History of the Art Biennial

The art biennial, an international arena for artistic talents, is the art world Olympics. Tracing back to 1895, the Venice Biennale was the only universally surveyed biennial exhibition for fifty-six years before the Bienal de São Paulo emerged in 1951. The Venice Biennale has gradually evolved into a grand-scale exhibition with international pavilions representing a miniature of the art world. More than half a century after the first Venice Biennale, the Bienal de São Paulo emerged in South America, presenting an alternative version of the art world from a Latin American perspective. Hosted in Brazil, the Bienal de São Paulo has contested the Eurocentric notion of “art” ever since it launched (Esche 1989, Enwezor 2003, Belting 2013). The Bienal de São Paulo’s geopolitical importance has inspired a wave of biennials, triennials, or other reoccurring periodical exhibitions established in non-European countries. With innovative curatorial practices different from the Venetian model, these later emerged art biennials on different continents provide various perspectives of “global art.”

The globalized art biennial has a more complicated order than the center-periphery dichotomy. Gupta discusses the art history with a critical perspective, “Shifting attention from what is enunciated to the place of enunciation, I want to propose that we begin to see conceptions of ‘dominant/dominated,’ ‘canon/margins,’ and ‘center/peripheries’ beyond imagined West/Non-west binaries. Notions of

‘center/peripheries’ belong in part to a geography of the mind, a mental map that demarcates certain places as more distant from others” (Gupta 2017, 24). Applying Gupta’s vision on global remapping, I examine Sinophone art biennials beyond the regional scope and re-center the Taipei Biennial as a case of Taiwan’s contemporary cultural production that enunciates and negotiates with global powers.

Since 1989, a year that signifies the end of the Cold War and the beginning of scholarships about global capitalism, the art biennials that emerged on different continents have formed a globalized network. In Esche’s study on the 1989 art biennials,

1989 was one of the most significant years in the twentieth century. It saw the massacre at Tiananmen Square, the fall of communist governments across Eastern Europe and the invention of the World Wide Web, events that resulted in a new political settlement, a new global economy and the growing collective consciousness that we live with today. In a contemporary art context too, the exhibition “Magiciens de la Terre” in Paris, “The Other Story” in London, and the third Bienal de la Habana in Cuba...coincidentally opened in that same year. (Esche 1989, 8)

The emerging art biennials around the globe have created a paradigm shift in the contemporary art world. Perhaps more importantly, the art biennials demystify the privilege of museum exhibitions because many art biennials’ public events often take place outside of the museum’s space, happening on multiple sites in a city (Hou 2002, Enwezor 2003, Obrist 2003, for example). These art biennial’s curatorial innovations are often beyond the museum’s white-box display.

Conventionally, the “global” locates in the periphery of the world, and the hierarchical frame creates the Western notion of art history and produces orthodox global art (Gupta 2017, Marchart 2020). But the later emerged non-Western art biennials present various adaptations and resistant forms of international art project: “Although the

first Biennials were more focused on retrospectives and European modernity, as time went on, they increasingly included non-Western nations — for instance, the 1954 edition included contributions from Indonesia, Israel and Egypt, and in the years that followed, from India, Lebanon, the Philippines, Senegal, Taiwan, and Vietnam, among others” (Marchart 2020, 3). These non-Western biennials adopt the Venice Biennial model but promote local values, they also represent geopolitical networks in the art world. Although many would argue that the Venice Biennale is the oldest hence the canon of the art biennial exhibition, the art biennial’s global proliferation brings out a democratic ideal with various forms of reoccurring mega-exhibitions and multiple centers of contemporary art.

Audiences expect to gain art knowledge in the biennial exhibitions; these international art biennials become the institutions that endorse what “global art” is (Vogel 2010, Gardner and Green 2016, Belting 2013, Marchart 2020). The artistic value is often based on the viewer’s subjective evaluation to judge the work of art; Once an artist makes a painting, its artistic value does not occur in a vacuum outside the perceptions of its audiences (Becker 1982, Bourdieu 1993, Morgner 2020). The trajectory of artistic value relies on the underlying social structures that make the value’s creation, reception, and circulation possible. Today, the valorization of artistic value is more complicated than ever. One reason is the complexities of cultural industries’ participators, such as artists, curators, art institutions, biennial exhibitions, museums, galleries, art schools, art markets, art patrons, art journals, and visitors, to name a few. These agents’ receptions and interactions contribute to the field of artistic value and cultural capital.

Conversely, the art biennial exhibition offers a space for cultural capital producing and circulating in its social networks with all the above participators and the whole interacting matrix. By engaging with the art biennial, these participators gain social networks, cultural capital, art knowledge, and symbolic prestige (Bourdieu 1993). Curators and artists' collective work in the art biennial exhibitions further alternate local traditions with global art communities' interaction. Therefore, the art biennial is the locus of hybrid cultural values' production, a contested terrain with democratic ideals to showcase local and international artists' endeavors.

2. The Art Biennial's Global Proliferation

The emergence of art biennials around the globe began to rewrite "global art" from authentic local visions and diverse cultural values (Belting 2013, Enwezor 2004, Gupta 2017, Marchart 2020). Cases include the Bienal de São Paulo (South America) in 1951, the Indian Triennale (Asia) in 1968, the Havana Biennial (North America) in 1984, the Istanbul Biennial (Middle East) in 1987, the Dak'Art Biennial (Africa) in 1996, and the East Asian wave of art biennials since 1989, for example (Table 15). The year 1989 is also associated with a groundbreaking exhibition *China/Avant-Garde* in Beijing (W. Hung 2000, Gao 2011, Pollack 2018). Curated by art critic Minglu Gao, the artists in *China/Avant-Garde* shared cynical and sarcastic attitudes toward China's social reality, re-appropriated Cultural Revolution symbols, and borrowed international art trends with China's political subject matters. The exhibition took place in Spring 1989 when students were gathering at Tiananmen Square for a pro-democracy protest. Still, *China/Avant-Garde* also confronted severe censorship as it closed and re-opened twice in two

weeks, then completely shut down after the Tiananmen Square protest turned into a brutal tragedy in June 1989.

Establishing an international mega-exhibition under a city's name has become trendy in Asia. Examples include Taiwan's Taipei Biennial (1992-), Korea's Gwangju Biennial (1995-) and Busan Biennial (1981-), Japan's Yokohama Triennial (2001-) and Fukuoka Triennial (1999-), China's Shanghai Biennial (1996-) and Guangzhou Triennial (2002-), Hong Kong Art Biennale (1975-), the Singapore Biennial (2006-), to name a few (Biennial Foundation 2009). Endorsed by the respective municipal government, the art biennial is part of the city branding project.³⁶ The art biennial also boosts a country's cultural soft power to attract international allies (Nye 2004). As a result, many Asian cities allocate funds for urban development and curating international art events to gain cultural capital.

Meanwhile, global capitalism increases the competition among art exhibitions in different regions. The art biennial staff expands the event's publicity and financial resources, and the competition extends beyond the art scene to other cultural industries and even commerce. Many art biennials also incorporate tourism for the intensified intercity competition to attract international visitors (Esche 1989, Naylor 2020). During the 1990s, the mushrooming biennial exhibitions in Chinese-speaking regions shaped the art biennial's East Asian wave. As Table 3 and Table 15 indicate that five biennales are

³⁶ See, also, Lin Ye and Emma Björner. "Linking city branding to multi-level urban governance in Chinese mega-cities: A case study of Guangzhou." *Cities* 80 (2018): 29-37.

organized by public museums and art institutions in Taiwan, and at least ten biennales launched in China's coastal cities around 2000.

3. The Geopolitics of Art Biennials across the Taiwan Strait

The growing number of art biennials across the Taiwan Strait represents more than art but complex meanings. In particular, the Taipei Biennial helps to put Taiwan on the global art map as Taiwan's international visibility is often obscured by complex political relations between China and Japan, and between China and the US (e.g., S. Shih 2003, Lai 2008, Tucker 2008, Turner 2009, CT Wu 2009, Wei 2013). Taiwan's Ministry of Culture promotes local artists exhibiting overseas and encourages international cultural exchange to expand Taiwan's diplomatic space.³⁷ Examples include, as shown in the Introduction, the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) launched the Taipei Biennial in Taiwan's capital since 1992, and the Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale was established in 1983. Though the Taiwan Pavilion was forced to move to non-state parallel pavilions due to China's political intervention after 2003, the Taipei Biennial and the non-national level Taiwan Pavilion continue the international networks for Taiwanese cultural project (Lai 2008, Turner 2009, Wu 2009, Chao and Kompatsiaris 2020).

On the other side of the Taiwan Strait, the first Shanghai Biennale was launched in 1996, less than four years after the first domestic version of the Taipei Biennial. Two years later, the Taipei Biennial 1998 expanded beyond its domestic focus and invited

³⁷ See Ministry of Culture (MOC), "Fresh Taiwan: Taiwan's Creative Industries Global Outreach" [Fresh Taiwan: Tai Wan wen chuang, quan qiu kai dao], *Ministry of Culture, Taiwan*. Oct 22, 2013, https://www.moc.gov.tw/information_250_30554.html.

international artists. Following suit, the Shanghai Biennale also adopted an international scope in 2000. As state-promoted art biennials across the Taiwan Strait, both Biennials have become transnational platforms for global art, showcasing both regimes' soft power. In this context, the Taipei Biennial is not only an exhibition but strives to be a stage for international artists and curators while featuring multi-perspective about Taiwan.

The Taipei Biennial is not the only Taiwanese-host cultural event for global outreach; a local wave of art biennial events appeared across the island in the early 21st century. Table 3 shows Taiwan's publicly funded biennials, including the Taipei Biennial by Taipei Fine Arts Museum, the Asian Art Biennial, and the Taiwan Biennial by the National Taiwan Museum, the Kuandu Biennale by the Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts at Taipei National University of the Arts. Additionally, two editions of the unique Animamix Biennials (2007, 2009) toured across the Taiwan Strait from Taipei to Shanghai, Beijing, and Gwangzhou. Table 3 also shows that around the turn of the millennium, at least ten art biennials appeared in China's coastal cities as China's cultural policy promoting creative clusters and urban development (O'Connor and Gu 2006, Jiang 2008, Pollack 2018).

The Taipei Biennial and the Shanghai Biennale generate symbolic, cultural, and social capital for Taiwan and China. The artists and curators participating in the art biennials also possess certain cultural capital because the art biennial symbolizes a special cultural field: the state-promoted international mega-exhibition. Despite the geopolitical tension across the Taiwan Strait, there has always been cultural and commercial interaction: The Shanghai Biennale invited Taiwanese artists and vice versa, along with international curators and artists attending both Biennials with one flight trip.

Examples include how the 2008 Taipei Biennial cooperated with the Shanghai Biennale and the Gwangzhou Triennial (Lai 2008, 105), and the Animamix Biennial toured from Taipei to several cities in China (Table 3). Such interaction shows strategic cultural cooperation of Sinophone art biennials, despite political tension between both regimes across the Taiwan Strait.

3.1 Taiwan's (and Taiwanese) Diplomatic Non-Existence and the Rising

Taiwaneseeness

The history of Taiwan is composed of an interweaving multi-colonized history since the 15th century. Taiwan, or *Formosa*, was ruled by foreign forces: Dutch, Portugal, Japan. After fifty years of Japanese colonization ended with World War II, Taiwan was briefly returned to China's territory in 1947. Shortly in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took over mainland China and established the People's Republic of China (PRC) on October 1st. In other words, the split of Taiwan as ROC and China as PRC was not completely divided by the Cold War, but also by the Chinese Civil War. It is an ideological division that splits two regions with different national sovereignty and separated historical and cultural experiences.

In Taiwan, after the 228 Massacre in 1947— a massive killing of Taiwanese elites of the Japanese era, Taiwanese underwent a long period of white terror era. The Cold War sustained Chiang's authoritarian grip over Taiwan and imposed Chinese culture in Taiwan's education. When Mao Zedong, the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, rolled out a decade's Cultural Revolution (1966 - 1976) that sabotaged traditional Chinese values, Chiang Kai-shek correspondingly implemented a cultural movement in

Taiwan under the moniker of “The Renaissance of Chinese Culture” (Vickers 2008, 76). Taiwan’s National Palace Museum (NPM) was officially founded in 1965. Located in suburb Taipei, the NPM houses over 600,000 imperial collections from Beijing’s Forbidden City, Chinese Emperors’ Palace during the Qing dynasty. Although the KMT took the treasures when the troops were defeated by the CCP and sought refuge in Taiwan, Chiang built the NPM to show the international society that the ROC government preserved the orthodox Chinese cultural heritage while enforcing a centralized mainland Chinese cultural identity to Taiwanese people.

In 1971, Taiwan experienced a deteriorated situation on the world stage: the United Nations General Assembly admitted the PRC but expelled the ROC.³⁸ In 1979, the US Carter administration abolished official diplomatic relations with the ROC and switched it to the PRC. Since then, Washington’s Taiwan policy has been strategically ambiguous. As a result, Taiwan’s diplomatic space is often marginalized and it has oscillated between the dynamic US-China confrontation and interaction. Taiwan relies only on the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) to maintain limited diplomatic space and connection with the US. Such connection was restricted to commercial and cultural events, or less, as PRC aggressively prevented Taiwan from participating in international communities since 1979.³⁹ The Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) states that the US recognition of China “rests upon the expectation that the future of Taiwan will be

³⁸ United Nations, “United Nations General Assembly Session 26 Resolution 2758.” *Restoration of the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations A/RES/2758 (XXVI)* page 1. United Nations. October 25, 1971.

³⁹ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. "US Relations with Taiwan." *The US Department of State*. August 31, 2018. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-taiwan/>.

determined by peaceful means and that any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes is considered a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States.” But today, under CCP leader Xi Jinping’s aggressive pre-2025 reunification agenda, China’s increasing military drills invading Taiwan’s Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) are indeed “other than peaceful means.”⁴⁰ Although the TRA provides Taiwan to be treated under American laws the same as foreign countries, there is no guarantee that the US will intervene militarily if the PRC attacks or invades Taiwan.⁴¹

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, tensions between Taiwan and China have extended to economic and cultural spheres. PRC ceaselessly sets up influence operations to force ROC’s diplomatic allies to switch ties to Beijing. Taiwanese artists participating in international events also often encounter China’s political intervention, as I discussed in the Introduction section: the Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale was forced to move to a non-national space (e.g., S. Shih 2003, Lai 2008, Turner 2009, CT Wu 2009, Wei 2013). After joining the WTO in 2001, China continually boasts economic influence and further intimidates Taiwan through the PLA (People’s Liberation Army) navy ships sailing through ROC-controlled waters, sending jet fighter patrols or carrying out missile tests around the island that have increased the tension of actual warfare (e.g., Corcuff 2002, Tucker 2008, McIntyre 2018, Lin, Read and Thilly 2019, Huang 2020).

⁴⁰ See, also, Wallace C. Gregson, "Clarity Out of Chaos: America Must Explain Its Taiwan Policy," *National Interest*, November 30, 2021.

⁴¹ The US Congress, House, “Taiwan Relations Act, HR 2479.” *96th Congress Introduced in House*. April 10, 1979, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/96th-congress/house-bill/2479>.

Under PRC's persistent military threats claiming Taiwan as its territory, Taiwanese cultural identity becomes a political issue across the Strait and beyond.

After Taiwan's martial law ended in 1987, Taiwanese people gradually embraced local and indigenous cultural values beyond the "orthodox Chinese culture" imposed by Chiang Kai-shek's regime. Many cultural centers in rural Taiwan have been upgraded as local museums displaying Taiwanese aboriginal and Hakka traditions (CB Lee 2015). Taiwanese multiculturalism has awakened with democratic reforms and a free-market economy contributing to Taiwan's energetic local cultural events in the post-martial law era.

For Taiwan, a territorial much smaller political entity than China, adopting a soft-power strategy to gain international allies is more feasible than the military competition with the PRC. Taiwan's government further invests in digital technologies and cultural industries to connect with international communities. The Hsinchu Science Park, built as a local Silicon Valley, is a digital manufacturing zone where Taiwanese big techs reside: TSMC, Foxconn, Asus, Acer, Quanta computer, BenQ, Compal Electronics, to name a few. As Taiwan's government promotes creative content industries and cultural soft power, many of these technology enterprises have their art centers: including Acer Digital Arts Center (1992), Quanta Cultural & Education Foundation (1999) that promote technology and art, Hsinchu Digital City Art Center (2000), BenQ Digital Lifestyle Design Center (2002), TSMC Museum of Innovation (2016).

With the necessity of chip and digital components in the global supply chain, Taiwan's advanced digital industries serve as a "silicon shield" protecting the island from the rising competition and tension between the US and China (Feigenbaum 2020).

Taiwan's emerging digital art events are not only related to US-Taiwan's technological ties, but also corresponds to the global art scene's digital art trend: such as the Silicon Valley located *San Jose 01 Biennial* is exclusively for computer-generated art projects, the Whitney Biennial's *Internet Art Portal*, the SFMOMA's *Webby Awards*, to name a few. In effect, the digital art events are growing with international influences and local sponsorship for the growth of Taiwanese digital industries.

3.2 Historical Background of the Taipei Biennial

While embracing democratic values in the early 1990s, Taiwan's dynamic society has fostered the Taipei Biennial launched in 1996. The host Taipei Fine Arts Museum aimed to promote Taiwanese characteristics through the contemporary art exhibit; "The Quest for Identity" became the title of the 1996 Taipei Biennial with 110 artists showing their works (TFAM 1996). As the exhibition theme suggested, searching for Taiwanese identity is a political project; the establishment of the Taipei Biennial signifies Taiwanese critical thinking on contemporary Taiwan's cultural formation.

The Taipei Biennial's mission is inseparable from Taiwan's complex history and the island's geopolitical significance. On the map, Taiwan occupies a crucial location between China and Japan while connecting East Asia and Southeast Asia. As an island connected with early modern trade routes interacting with and struggling against colonial powers, Taiwan's unique culture has always been a mixture of international conflicts. After World War II, Taiwan has become geopolitically crucial to the US due to the island's key position on "*the first island chain.*" During the Korean War, John Foster Dulles defined "the first island chain" referring to the Pacific islands extending from the

Japanese archipelago, Okinawa, Taiwan, to the Philippines (Dulles [1952] 1962). The Island Chain Strategy is a maritime tactic for the US to counter China's expanding naval force across the Taiwan Strait and around the South China Sea. To the US, *Taiwan is situated at the frontline of defense against communism spreading from China to East and Southeast Asia, and Taiwan had a crucial geopolitical position amid the conflicts between the US and the USSR during the Cold War* (Ibid). Though the island chain strategy emphasizes Taiwan's geopolitical significance for both the US and China,⁴² Taiwan's diplomatic space has always oscillated between the US and China. Amidst the tension of the US-China competition rises and with China's increasing global influence, the US policy with Taiwan is strategically ambiguous with solid economic ties but without admitting Taiwan's political sovereignty (Tucker 2008, Department of State 2018).

The geopolitical situation influences the island's unique and dynamic cultural formation (e.g., Robertson 1995, Shih 2003, Pan 2014, Wang 2020). Taiwan's multiple colonized history also reflects a state of political displacement, "a profound crisis of major powers" (Trinh T. Minh-ha 2011, 46). Such a complex colonial past results in Taiwanese troubled cultural identity: "Due to unique historical and structural conditions Taiwan society has long been troubled by a national identity problem" (Wong and Sun 1998, 241). Encountering China's constant military intimidation and Taiwan's precarious sovereignty, Taiwanese cultural identity has also become a political issue. Former Taiwan's Minister of Culture Li-Chiun Cheng launched the Reconstructing Taiwanese Art History project in 2018. In an interview, Li-Chiun Cheng shared her

⁴² See Ryo Nakamura, "US to build anti-China missile network along first island chain," *Nikkei Asia*, March 5, 2021.

childhood memories of feeling “foreign” while studying mostly “Chinese” art history.⁴³ A French scholar of Taiwan studies, Stéphane Corcuff reviews Taiwan’s unique history and cultural formation and terms Taiwan as a “laboratory of identities” (Corcuff 2002, xi), suggesting Taiwan’s complex identity issue as a site of producing and experiment cultural identities.

Today, Taiwan again plays a critical role in-between the heated US-China Trade War and technological war: both the US and China depend heavily on the semiconductor chips made in Taiwan, particularly during the chip’s global shortage. According to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Taiwan’s leading chip manufacturing industry creates a “silicon shield” to secure Taiwan from the geopolitical tensions between the US and China (Feigenbaum 2020). In Taiwanese cultural production, the advanced digital industries have also shaped Taiwan’s contemporary art scene, which is addressed in the following sections.

3.3 The Underground Art Events in Taiwan’s Post-Martial Law Era

On July 15th, 1987, ROC President Chiang Ching-kuo declared that martial law was officially abolished. As Taiwan’s society began to experience a series of constitutional democratic reforms, artists and cultural workers also experienced social upheavals as Taiwan’s society was not accustomed to freedom of speech, particularly for

⁴³ See Yu-Yin Chang, "Cheng Li-Chiun and Reconstructing Taiwanese Art History," ArtCo, June 11, 2021. <https://artouch.com/people/content-40482.html>

Taiwanese people silenced by the nearly four-decade-long martial law and white terror era.⁴⁴

In the 1990s, Taiwan experienced a freer society with populist energy, the stock market rising amid earnings, a growing art market, free speech and media industries were on the verge of expansion. During 1988-1994, President Lee Teng-hui continued Taiwan's democratic reform, including the 1991 re-election for the National Assembly. In Taiwan's unique political landscape, the First National Assembly elected in 1947 has never been re-elected for decades until the end of white terror era. Mr. Lee Teng-hui as the first Taiwanese elected president, and the first non-Chinese émigré president, represented Taiwanese awakening political participation in the late 1990s. In 1994, a constitutional revision supported by Lee that the ROC presidency became a position for Taiwanese people's direct election. During Taiwan's first public vote for the presidential election, China launched its missile testing around Taiwan in March 1996. However, Taiwanese people responded to China's military intimidation with democratic values; the majority vote supported Lee's second term as Taiwan's president. The result encourages more Taiwanese to embrace democratic ideals and free speech of a liberal society distinguished from China's system.

During Lee Teng-hui's Administration, Taiwan's cultural identity has entered public discourse and debate (Corcuff 2002, McIntyre 2008). The idea of Taiwanese-ness gains popularity in Taiwanese people's self-realization and assertion of agency. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), a new political party was formed as

⁴⁴ According to the Article 11 of the Republic of China (Taiwan) Constitution: "The people shall have freedom of speech, teaching, writing and publication." See Law and Regulations Database of the Republic of China, Judicial Yuan ROC (Taiwan). <https://law.moj.gov.tw/ENG/LawClass/LawAll>.

the KMT's rival in the congress, proposed a Taiwanese-centered cultural policy that portrays Taiwan as a diverse, multicultural community of varied historical origins and ethnic groups.⁴⁵

These political reformations brought unforeseen Taiwanese populist energy, street movements, and underground art events. In such a dynamic and somewhat chaotic social climate, artist Wu Zhong-wei passionately self-organized the 1994 Taipei Broken Life Festival with his friends' support. On a humid afternoon in September 1994, a group of youths slowly gathered under a bridge by Taipei's Gonguan river bank, a vast abandoned field adjacent to the border of this capital city with several colleges nearby. A simple stage casually installed only a few hours earlier, barely anything else in the field hinted at an art event besides the crowds and their words of mouth.⁴⁶ Audiences were excited and shouted with the performances of the LTK Commune and the Zero and Sound Liberated Organization (ZSLO), two underground music bands self-claiming they were playing "noise." Several National Taiwan University students formed the LTK Commune, implying local identity by pronouncing Taiwan's longest river in Taiwanese "Lo-tsui-ke," not in the Mandarin Chinese pronunciation. Another group of four students from Fu-Jen Catholic University formed an underground band ZSLO, short for "Zero & Sound Liberation Organization." Both groups shared a loyal fan base, or precisely, "crowd-

⁴⁵ With the KMT one-party rule decline, Taiwan's parliamentary election eventually made a historical shift when the DPP won more seats to replace the KMT, becoming the largest party in December 2001 (Huang 2020).

⁴⁶ I participated in Taiwan's "noise" movement as a co-editor of *Noise-Taiwan* zine, helped to release handmade tapes, and wrote for promoting Taiwan's noise and sound art scene. See Jeph Lo, "Taiwan Shengyin Yishu Jianshi [A Brief History of Taiwan's Sound Art]." Taipei: Diancang Jinyishu Zazhi [ArtCo Magazine] Published. March 2007. <http://praxis.tw/archive/short-history-of-taiwan-sound-art.php>.

base” that grew out of Taiwan’s societal transitioning from a totalitarian state to a democratic country. With seemingly unrestrained possibilities and do-it-yourself energy, the crowds anticipated something new and provocative, and they enthusiastically participated in Wu Zhong-Wei’s grassroots events. The event went on with various activities not originally scheduled: spontaneous theatrical performances, experimental film screening, self-published fanzine exchanging, overnight bonfire dancing, and people camping on the field. Local news reported this event as a fiasco, yet the media attention soon shifted to the increasing protests on Taiwan’s streets. The energetic underground events and street movements corresponded to a special moment when Taiwanese began to practice free speech and self-expression; Taiwan had undergone oppressive martial law for thirty-eight years, the longest world record when it was lifted.

The 1990s in Taiwan was such a tumultuous time with street protests and counter-cultural activities emerged. In March 1990, the *Wild Lily* student movement gathered nearly 6,000 students who protested for democratic reformation and occupied the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall square, later renamed as the *Liberty Square*. President Lee Teng-hui met student representatives and settled a deal as a national policy to terminate the Old Congress of the ROC, which, as I mentioned above, has never been re-elected since 1949 when the KMT troops retreated to Taiwan from China after defeated by Mao’s troops. With social movements opening a safe space for free-speech, Taiwanese youths were eager to do something.

Wu Zhong-wei again initiated another event with Chiwei Lin (a ZSLO band member). With great efforts by Yeh Hui-wen and many supportive “comrades,” the 1995 Post-industrial Art Festival took shape. This festival was based upon youth DIY spirit,

the anarchic vibe, and surprisingly got governmental sponsorship. It was an unprecedented cooperation between underground artists and the new party DPP. The DPP sponsored the 1995 Post-industrial Art Festival, which could be seen as a political tactic: the newly emerged party tried to include the youths' events to gain more votes within Taiwan's bipartisan competition (Lo 2007). But the 1995 Post-industrial Art Festival's performance turned out provocative and frustrated the DPP's funding staff.⁴⁷

According to Chiwei Lin, this grassroots countercultural event was supported by Taiwanese youths and their anger toward China's military threats (Chiwei Lin 2012). Known as the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis (1996), China conducted several missile tests and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) live-fire exercises in the island's waters to intimidate Taiwanese joining the first direct-vote presidential election. But China's bullying coercion only incited the rise of Taiwanese consciousness, an indestructible Taiwanese-ness.

Chiwei Lin attributed the "success" of the 1995 Post-Industrial Art Festival to the passionate and dedicated Taiwanese youths; Lin argues that the artists were simply parts of the crowd (C. Lin 2012). Jeph Lo observes that there were no more provocative, self-organized counter-cultural events after the 1995 festival; Lo considers Taiwan's gradually stabilized social order quieted down the underground noise scene (Lo 2007). The DPP's funding signifies that Taiwan's government began to invest and unavoidably institutionalize the underground art events (Lo 2007, C. Lin 2012). More government-

⁴⁷ In addition to the LTK Commune and the ZSLO, local Taiwanese groups joined in the event were *Dino*, *XJ Bitch and Dog*; while the international underground groups were *Ouchi Apartment Fever*, *Basshaham*, and *C.C.C.C.* from Japan, *Schimfluch* from Switzerland, *Con-Dom* from the UK (Kuo 2000, Lo 2007, C. Lin 2012).

funded projects were launched to support the contemporary Taiwanese art scene, including the state-sponsored Taipei Biennial by the municipal governed TFAM and emerging digital art events by Taiwan's government.⁴⁸

3.4 Taiwan's Soft Power: Digital and Cultural Industries

Taiwanese "noise" scene became much quieter after the 1995 Post-industrial Art Festival.⁴⁹ Some noise performers continued their gigs with new buzz words ("experimental sound," "electronic sound," "techno-," "digital," or "sound art") printed on their fliers acutely substituted the transgressive "noise."⁵⁰ To achieve rear-garde from avant-garde is never a shortcut (Bourdieu 1993). How would the underground Taiwanese "noise" performers transform into digital artists performing in government-sponsored events in less than five years?

Bourdieu uses French Impressionism as an example, to become rear-garde requires an artist's long-term dedication to be recognized and legitimized in cultural

⁴⁸ In Taiwan, the National Culture and Art Foundation (NCAF) launched the National Award for Arts to support and sponsor outstanding artists and art professionals since 1997. See National Culture and Art Foundation (NCAF), "Grants and Awards", National Culture and Art Foundation, Taiwan. https://www.ncafroc.org.tw/grants_award.html

⁴⁹ Claiming their work as "noise" but not "music," these Taiwanese underground artists experiment "sound" as the key element in their work without conventional music training and composition.

⁵⁰ After the 2000s, Taiwan's experimental sound events include *Static Riot* (2001), *Electroacoustic Combat* (2002), *Taiwan's International Digital Art Forum* (2002), *Weather in My Brain Sound-Image Festival* (2003), *Bias Sound Art Festival* (2003), *Sounding Taipei* (2004), *the 2nd Weather in My Brain Sound-Image Festival* (2004), *Sounding Taipei* (2004), *Navigator-Digital Art in the Making* (2004), *the 2nd Bias Sound Art Festival* (2005), *the 3rd Weather in My Brain Sound-Image Festival* (2005), to name a few (NTMFA 2017).

production. Impressionism was an aesthetic revolution involving many artists who were considered vulgar and unskillful. But it took decades for these artists' collective efforts to be recognized and institutionalized their artistic value. In the case of Taiwan's "noise" scene, it quickly shifted to institutionally recognized "sound art." Jeff Lo points out that the name-changing corresponded to the timing when Taiwan's government began to invest in digital art and digital content industries; "digital sound art performances" were gaining attention to attract museum-goers (2007).

Since the 1990s, Taiwan's Ministry of Economy has emphasized the interconnection of local digital-tech enterprises with the global economy, promoting Taiwan's semiconductor and digital cultural production for Taiwan's upgraded economic development (Y. Chang 2006, CB Lee 2015). Meanwhile, Taiwanese government incorporates digital creative content industries to expand Taiwan's soft power in US-led international politics. According to *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*:

Taiwan, in effect, discovered Silicon Valley decades before the rest of the world did. Since the 1970s, the process of 'brain circulation' of Taiwan-born, U.S.-educated and -trained engineers and entrepreneurs with close ties to, and ongoing relationships with, the valley and other US innovation hubs have driven a wave of entrepreneurial growth in semiconductors, personal computers, and other hardware-related industries. (Feigenbaum and Weisel 2021)

This text records that Washington also benefits from strong ties with Taipei, for Taiwan is America's tenth-largest trading partner with an important link in global high-technology supply chains.

Under these circumstances, Taiwan's museums also began to curate more digital art exhibitions, including DigiArk at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMFA), Taipei Digital Art Center, and aforementioned digital sound events with state

sponsorship.⁵¹ Since 2002, Taiwan’s Ministry of Executive Council launched the “Challenge 2008: National Development Plan,” emphasizing the “Digital Art Project” as one of the primary tasks for Taiwan’s creative content industries.⁵² Under this plan, the NTMFA facilitates a series of digital art events to nurture local artists to enhance Taiwan’s creative cultural industries and bridge international collaboration (NTMFA 2017). With digital facilities installed in an exhibition creating hyperreal excitement for the audience, Taiwanese exhibitions’ themes and contents become increasingly engaged with digital technology. The playful digital installations are “edutainment” – emphasizing the interactivity and “entertainmentality” with the audience – challenging the traditional idea of art.⁵³

3.5 The Taipei Biennial: Positioning Taiwan on the Global Art Map

⁵¹ According to Tate Museum, digital art refers to computer generated artwork, or art practice that applies digital technology. See “Art Term” by Tate Museum, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/d/digital-art>. A comprehensive interrogation of "digital art" can also be found in the Chicago School of Media Theory's "digital art" webpage, written by Lauren Tresp. <https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/digital-art/>.

⁵² Ministry of Executive Council, “Challenge 2008: National Development Plan,” *Ministry of Executive Council, Taiwan*. No. 0910027097. May 31 (2002): 44-45.

⁵³ In museum display, Timothy W. Luke terms “entertainmentality” to describe some museums “fully invested in the aesthetic assumptions of the global entertainment business” to attract audiences (Luke 2002 xxiii). Whereas “edutainment,” termed by Jane and Ed Bedno, the exhibition designers for Chicago’s Museum of Science and Industry, illustrates that many museums are designed as the theme-park to offer entertaining and educational events for the audience (Jane and Ed Bedno 4).

Taiwan's vibrant post-martial law era has nurtured the birth of the Taipei Biennial, which was hosted in the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM). Located in Taiwan's capital, the TFAM is a Taipei municipal museum established in 1983 and supervised by the Taipei city government. Though the museum's primary funding is from the government, the TFAM's official website shows that several international organizations have aided the Taipei Biennial, including the American Institute in Taiwan sponsored the Biennial exhibitions in 2010 and 2016.⁵⁴

The Taipei Biennial was launched in 1992 but expanded to an international scale after 1998. Table 4 shows the Taipei Biennale's curatorial decision: from employing a group of Taiwanese curators in 1996, to choose one foreign (Japanese) curator for the 1998 Taipei Biennial; Between 2000 to 2010, the TFAM designed a Duo-Curators System by inviting one international curator working with one Taiwanese curator. The idea behind the Duo-Curators System, according to Lai's observation, was to build up the Taipei Biennial's global networks effectively:

In order to adapt to the international 'biennial' trend while promoting Taiwan's contemporary art abroad to draw international attention, the TFAM began to invite Internationally-renowned curators to cooperate with local Taiwanese curators, marking the first time that Taiwan held an international art biennial. (Lai 2008, 104)

With the international curators' affiliations and local art professionals' contributions, the Taipei Biennial first few editions have been productive.

But from 2012 to 2016, there were three editions of the Taipei Biennial, with one foreign curator taking full charge of the Taipei Biennial. Taiwan's art circle questions if

⁵⁴ The Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), "TFAM Sponsorship." *The Taipei Fine Arts Museum*. Accessed November 10, 2021. <https://www.tfam.museum/Common/editor.aspx?id=84&ddlLang=en-us>

the Taipei Biennial's favoring foreign curators truly achieves, or fails to achieve, the mission to make Taiwan's art more visible in the hierarchical biennial world (CT Wu 2009, PY Lu 2017, Cheng 2012). Until 2018, the Taipei Biennial again recruited one local curator working with one non-Taiwanese curator. The host museum TFAM often received criticism concerning the selection of foreign curators, which, in many critics' view, conflicts with Taiwan's cultural autonomy.

3.6 Historical Background of the Shanghai Biennale

Across the Taiwan Strait, the first Shanghai Biennale was established in 1996. Corresponding to China's economic reform, contemporary Chinese art began taking a bigger share of the global market. According to the *Global Art Market Report 2020*, global sales of art and antiques were around \$64.1 billion in 2019. Three major international art hubs – US, UK, and China – take more than 80 percent of global sales (McAndrew 2020). China's government also promotes creative clusters and art events; many state-promoted art clusters and cultural events were inaugurated in China's coastal cities (O'Connor and Gu 2006, Jiang 2008, Pollack 2018). However, there were hardly any avant-garde art events in China half a century ago during the Cultural Revolution.

Contemporary Chinese artist Xu Bing emphasizes, "To understand contemporary Chinese art, you must study the Culture Revolution, the impact of Mao's ideas about culture."⁵⁵ Under the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), a radical mass

⁵⁵ William Poy Lee. "Anti-Revolutionary Art: The Sigg Collection Tracks the Rise of Chinese Modernism." San Francisco Bay Guardian. July 26, 2008. <https://alumni.berkeley.edu/california-magazine/may-june-2008-beijing-primer/anti-revolutionary-art>.

movement under Mao Zedong's "New China" moniker, cultural production only served communist ideology. Mao Zedong initiated the Cultural Revolution to consolidate his authority and purge his political rivals. During the Revolution, Mao ordered Communist Party officials to shut down schools and mobilized the whole nation's youths as red guards overthrowing Chinese traditional values and Confucius tradition, as if the historical "burden" has hindered China from catching up with the West in modernization progress. "Red" was the color of the Revolution (Jiang 2011), and red propaganda was the primary cultural production of the time: such as the Red Guard Performance, "artwork for the mass" with "socialist in content and Chineseness in style" (e.g., Sullivan 1996, Gao 2011, Jiang 2011, Julia Andrews and Kuiyi Shen 2012).

Chairman Mao's image was touted as "the bright red sun" [hongtaiyang] and became an omnipresent image occupying every street corner and household. Artists worked for communist propaganda or drew Mao's portraits with laborers, peasants, and soldiers [gong nong bing] on their posters. These posters orchestrated Mao's personality cult for the general public to follow the CCP's party line. Artistic freedom was considered dangerous and condemned as corrupted bourgeois taste, or the "poisonous weeds" that would be facing public criticism or would even be sent to the struggle session to be purged and eradicated (W. Hung 2010, Jiang 2011, Gao 2011). The avant-garde art movement was non-existent during the Cultural Revolution because the nature of avant-garde could provoke the regime's structural change.

In 1976, Mao's death symbolized the end of the destructive Cultural Revolution. The next leader, Deng Xiaoping, and other reformists implemented a series of economic projects, also known as the Open Door Policy (1978-1984). In 1977, Deng Xiaoping gave

a speech at the Closing Reception of the Chinese Communist Party's Eleventh *National Congress* and declared that China would be moving toward economic liberation.⁵⁶

Deng's speech set the undertone of China's Economic Reform and Opening-up policy [gaige kaifang] that began with the de-collectivization of the countryside. Following industrial restructurings aimed at decentralizing government controls in the industrial sector, China began to adopt a totalitarian capitalist strategy to build a moderately prosperous [xiaokang] society.

The economic reform welcomed foreign capital to invest in China and released channels for Western art markets and cultural industries. After 1976, several underground art movements in China emerged and paved the way for the contemporary art scene to grow (W. Hung 2008, Pollack 2018, Gao 2011). Corresponding to economic reform policy, the Chinese government built urban art districts, cultural clusters, and state-promoted international art exhibitions in the first-tier coastal cities; Shanghai's is the most prominent one (O'Connor and Gu 2006).

In the scholarship on art practices in Chinese-speaking regions, the term "modern" refers to a new aesthetic corresponding to a new nation-state; therefore, the aesthetic value of contemporary Chinese art is more complicated than a response to Western modern art trends (e.g., Sullivan 1996, W. Hung 2000, Gao 2011). Michael Sullivan points out that the term "modernity" to Chinese artists is less about an avant-

⁵⁶ The *National Congress* of Chinese Communist Party [Zhongguo Gongchandang Quanguo Daibiao Dahui], "Deng Xiaoping's Speech at the Closing Reception of Chinese Communist Party's Eleventh *National Congress*" [Deng Xiaoping zai shiyida shang de bimuci], *People's Web, PRC [renmin wang]*, August 18, 1977, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64168/64563/index.html>.

garde aesthetic that for Euro-American artists; instead, it is about political connotations related to constructing a modern nation-state since the Qing dynasty ended in 1911 (Sullivan 1996). Minglu Gao further posits that the “avant-garde” spirit in contemporary Chinese art practice is different from the Western avant-garde connotation: “If we bear in mind the core value of the ‘Revolution in Art’ in China at the beginning of the twentieth century, we shall know that realism is far more than just a style. It has a deep connection with the modern value of ‘art for life’s sake.’ The progressive mode from realism to abstract art, and, further, to conceptual art that summarizes art history in the West is not necessarily valid for art in China” (Gao 2011, 13-14).

3.7 The Emerging Chinese Avant-garde Art Movements

An unprecedented dynamic art scene has grown out of post-Mao China. The Open Door Policy allows international business to engage with China’s economic transformation, which stimulated cultural exchanges between China and the world, although invisibly. With ports to trade foreign commodities, cities in China’s southern provinces (such as Xiamen) are at the forefront of contacting the international business, information, and ideas earlier than other areas. Inspired by Western conceptual art experiments, the Xiamen Dada art movement and the ’85 Art New Wave [85 meishu xinchao] emerged and became the earlier avant-garde art practices in China after the Cultural Revolution (W. Hung 2002, Jiang 2011). These Chinese avant-garde artists formed art groups and events to share ideas and networks. They adopted Dadaist absurdity and Warholian attitude, using pop culture for their inspiration, cautiously playing with China’s political subject matter. Since the mid-1980s, China’s avant-garde

art movements sprang from a comparatively open and more unrestrained social milieu. Artists were working in groups and organized exhibitions – such as “Scar Paintings” and “Art of the Wounded” – touching on traumatic experiences during the nation’s devastating past through the Great Leap Forward to the Cultural Revolution (Gao 1999, W. Hung 2002, Jiang 2011). Until 1986, there were about 186 art groups in sixteen areas across China (See Table 8). The table indicates that there were no independently self-organized experimental art groups even a year after the Cultural Revolution ended, but more art groups emerged from 1984 to 1986.

Wu Hung analyzes that the art group The Stars’ action incited other experimental art groups that emerged in China around the mid-80s, later called “the ’85 Art New Wave” by China’s art circle. In the early 90s, Hung observes, “a fundamental development of Chinese experimental art since the early 90s, up till now has been a shift from a collective movement to individualized experiments” (W. Hung 2000, 84). But artists became concerned that experimental art events would move toward becoming normalized and institutionalized. The emerging Chinese curators also “became increasingly critical toward foreign curators, accusing them of coming to China to ‘pick’ works to support their own views of China and Chinese art, which the artists saw as a typical Orientalistic or post-colonial practice” (W. Hung 2000, 85). Artists of Political Pop and Cynical Realism artists adopt Pop Art’s satire, challenging the boundary between “art” and “pop culture” but in the Chinese cultural context.⁵⁷ Political Pop artists often use the iconic Chairman Mao’s portrait juxtaposed with the symbols from commercial advertisements. But emerging contemporary artists working in a similar

⁵⁷ The Pop Art movement initially emerged in North America in the 1960s.

direction as the Cultural Revolution's red posters created Mao as the prominent political celebrity in China. The intention is not nostalgic but sarcastic, because Mao's image is used in different social and economic contexts: "Key motifs such as the ironic use of the imagery of Mao's propaganda machine and distinctive use of the Communist red colour palate, made the work easily recognizable as 'typically Chinese' due to its use of 'Chinese characteristics'" (Preece 2014, 34). These artists were rebellious against the idea that art and cultural production could only serve communist ideology, however, the problematic "Chineseness" creates the brand image of "contemporary Chinese art" circulating in global art market.

In 1979, a landmark exhibition titled *The Stars* took place in a park outside the National Art Museum in Beijing. The Stars was an art group formed by artists who were rejected by the museum's official exhibitions, but they self-organized events to show their unconventional art installations outside the museum for public viewing (W. Hung 2008, Gao 2011). The police forced the exhibition to close, but the artists soon turned underground, searching for artistic freedom.

In February 1989, the National Gallery in Beijing presented its first state-permitted contemporary art exhibition dealing with the avant-garde: *China/Avant-Garde*. The *China/Avant-Garde* exhibition displayed various artistic styles different from Socialist Realism - China's officially recognized art style to promote communist ideology (W. Hung 2008, Gao 2011, Jiang 2011). This exhibition represented Chinese avant-garde artists' pursuit of individual creativity; They appropriated Chairman Mao's image and political icons from the red propaganda, mockingly juxtaposing them with commercial logos and sarcastic gestures in their art products. These artists share a politically

ambiguous attitude depicting China's social reality within their works without directly challenging the authority. This kind of obscurity is a social critique that incites viewers' interpretations. However, the *China/Avant-Garde* exhibition confronted severe scrutiny, as the event was happening when more students had been gathering and protesting at Tiananmen Square since the previous April. The exhibition was forced to close and re-open twice in two weeks, then completely shut down before June 1989.

Exploiting Mao's icon is not the only common practice of contemporary Chinese art. Chinese avant-garde artists also playfully adopt the theatricality of the Cultural Revolution – such as the red guard performance in woman artist Cao Fei's work, for example – or highlight three symbolic elements: redness, brightness, and luminosity.⁵⁸ In examining the Saatchi collection of contemporary Chinese art, Jiang Jiehong discovers the iconography of the appropriated Chairman Mao's portrait and the widely used red color (Jiang 2008). As I addressed in Chapter 1, contemporary Chinese artists' parodies gradually achieved artistic legitimacy in the global art market and received support from international collectors and media attention, building contemporary Chinese art's fame worldwide.

3.8 The Shanghai Biennale as China's Symbolic Capital

China's market has evolved from a basic merchandizing economy to a leisure economy; the demand for cultural production is now a rising economic area (Keane 2006). China's policymakers also promote cultural industries, technological innovation,

⁵⁸ Lu Hong, "Artists' Contemplation on the Cultural Revolution [wenge cijian yishujia mianlin de wenti cingjing]," *Guangdong Museum of Art*, December 2007. http://www.gdmoa.org/exhibition/exhibitions/2005/xgwd_2005/200712/t20071213_5615.shtml.

and urban development. In 2009, the State Council of the People's Republic of China presented a five-year plan (2011–2015) that began with an emphasis on cultural soft power: building art clusters, public and private museums in urban areas with the promotion of art sales in galleries and auction houses (Yeh 2007). In 2018, China established the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to merge cultural industries with tourism. The goal is to promote Chinese cultural products and attract international visitors.⁵⁹ In considering cultural industries as part of a long-term economic goal, the Chinese government designs coastal cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen) as the centers of cultural services. As a result, a growing contemporary art scene has appeared in these coastal cities. Among these coastal cities, Shanghai has always been the prominent international hub that connects China with the world (e.g., Yeh 2007, Tu 2018). China's government launched an ambitious urbanization plan to build coastal cities to catch up with other international cultural capitals.⁶⁰ Following the state policy, the Shanghai municipal government implements many urban development projects with about twenty creative parks and art clusters to attract international investment (Tu 2018). The West Bund Cultural Corridor (WBCC), the Xu Hui district cultural and economic

⁵⁹ The first session of the 13th National People's Congress, PRC, announced that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China is established by merging the Ministry of Culture with the China National Tourism Administration. See *Xinjingbao*, "The Cultural Bureau and the National Tourism combined to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism." *Xinjingbao*, March 13, 2018. https://m.sohu.com/a/225429668_114988.

⁶⁰ *Xinhuashe*, "Central Committee of CPC's Suggestion to 12th Five-Year-Plan of National Economic and Social Development." *Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCCPC)*. 2010. http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2010-10/27/content_1731694_2.htm.

complex, and the Suzhou Creek district have transformed from abandoned old factories and warehouses to artists' studios and galleries.⁶¹

Meanwhile, many Chinese collectors began to support contemporary Chinese art and opened their private museums and galleries in Shanghai. For example, Budi Tek (a Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneur) launched the Yuz Museum in the Xuhui district in 2007. The art-collector couple Wang Wei and Liu Yiqian have been included on the *ArtReview*'s Power 100 board three times since 2016 to 2018, showing their growing influence over the global art world. For their \$100 million worth of international art collections, this art couple built the Long Museum in Shanghai in 2012 to store and to display.⁶²

Evolving with China's economic reform and more than two hundred skyscrapers, Shanghai's rapid urbanization has become phenomenal, boosting the city's international tourism and commerce. The metropolitan Shanghai also witnesses a wave of mushrooming private museums and art centers: China Art Palace, the Power Station of Art, MOCA Shanghai, the Minsheng Banking Corporation, the Rockbund Museum, and the Zendai Himalayas Art Museum, to name a few (Tu 2018). Joining this roster of art

⁶¹ Shanghai's urbanization has both utopic and dystopic effects. In "New-build gentrification in central Shanghai: demographic changes and socioeconomic implications," Shenjing He explores that China's state intervention in Shanghai's rapid urbanization, as well as the process of gentrification," also increase the gap between the rich and the poor residents (Shenjing He 2010). In Marina Peterson's research on global cities' development with her focus on downtown Los Angeles, Peterson uncovers the state-driven urban development often organized around art, or using art to serve for real estate investment and capital accumulation (Marina Peterson 2012).

⁶² *ArtReview*, "Wang Wei & Liu Yiqian in Power 100." *ArtReview*. <https://artreview.com/artist/wang-wei-liu-yiqian/?year=2019>. Last accessed December 10, 2020.

space, the Shanghai Art Museum launched the Shanghai Biennale in the city's landmark cultural district in 2016.

CHAPTER THREE:

Mapping the Shanghai Biennale

“The significance of its [the Biennale’s] success will far transcend the exhibition itself. As an activity established on an international scale that seriously addresses the issues of globalization, post-colonialism and regionalism, etc., this Shanghai Biennale will set a good example for our Chinese colleagues and is bound to secure its due status among other world-famous biennial art exhibitions.”

- Fang Zengxian, the Director of Shanghai Art Museum, addressed in the 2000 Shanghai Biennale’s artistic committee ⁶³

The above statement by the Shanghai Art Museum’s director signified the Shanghai Biennale’s ambition to be a leading exhibition in the art world. Viewing the Shanghai Biennale on the global art map, this state-promoted exhibition adds on the city’s cosmopolitan vibe. From 1996 to 1998, the earlier two editions of the Shanghai Biennale were domestic events with the themes of *Open Space* and *Inheritance and Expansion*. But the flagship event was the 2000 Shanghai Biennale boasted *Shanghai Spirit* that began recruiting international curators and artists with their multimedia installations, which was unprecedented, as most art exhibitions in China’s state-run venues were showing paintings, water-ink calligraphy, and traditional media. Though many contemporary Chinese artists negotiate their cultural heritage and declare that they are not only Chinese but global artists (Pollack 2018), this chapter focuses on the Shanghai Biennale’s Chinese artists’ work to explore their visual meanings and symbolic values

⁶³ See, also, “Preface of Shanghai Art Museum,” *Shanghai Biennale 2000*. Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2000. Wu Hung, “Experimental Exhibitions of the 1990s,” in *Reinterpretation: A Decade of Experimental Chinese Art*. University of Chicago Press. 2000.

spreading through regional to global contexts – particularly those art installations exploring the dystopic reality under the utopic cosmopolitan façade, and those reflecting local socio-economic transition and engaging in global art fashions. The following passages begin with significant editions of the Shanghai Biennale and intend to decipher the hidden meanings in various curatorial statements within curators’ favoring philosophical concepts and profound ideas.

1. The First Shanghai Biennale in 1996

With the theme *Open Space*, the first Shanghai Biennale presented twenty-nine Chinese artists’ works and mostly were paintings and sculptures. Only three multimedia and installation projects were shown in this Biennial, Zhang Jianjun’s dazzling *Taichi Disco* (Image 2) was one of them.

Zhang Jianjun installed fifty television screens and an audio-controlled lightbox shaped by a Yin-Yang emblem; his work *Taichi Disco* transformed the exhibition space into a dance floor. This art installation was simple: combining the *tai chi* symbol with disco music. Zhang played with the cross-cultural meanings of “tai chi” and “disco”: juxtaposing the terms and their associated visual objects. Tai chi is a typical morning exercise among Chinese elders, sometimes practiced in a freestyle movement that might be similar to disco. The two dots inside the Yin-Yang pattern lit up with the disco beats and music in six different combinations,

However, Zhang welcomed cross-cultural misinterpretations to his work: the television screens showed military exercises, but the artist muted the soldiers’ sound. The shining *tai chi* and disco music playing in the background created a moving image as if

the troops were dancing with the disco music. *Taichi Disco* intrigued the audiences who were not accustomed to installation art to wonder about the meanings of his work, and even drew police attention because it seemed to criticize the military.⁶⁴

2. *Inheritance and Expansion: The 1998 Shanghai Biennale*

The *Shanghai Biennale* co-curated the second edition with Annie Wong Art Foundation to present Chinese ink painting and its modern style, though it only featured Chinese artists' works. Under the theme *Inheritance and Expansion*, the 1998 exhibition focused on traditional Chinese materials, including water-ink, watercolor painting, and calligraphy. In the catalog, the host Shanghai Art Museum addressed that this exhibition aimed to explore new possibilities of Chinese ink art with contemporary adaptations (PSA 1998).

An unscheduled performance occurred on the opening day of the Shanghai Biennial. Zhou Hongxiang, a calligrapher teaching at the Shanghai Normal University, was not invited to the Biennial but appeared at the exhibition hall. Zhou quickly sprinkled a line of ink with a calligraphy brush on a 30-meter scroll, named this work *A Line of Water-ink Running Forward and Backward* (Artda Archive 1998). Soon the security guard intervened, and this impromptu performance was withdrawn, although Zhou's work was still relevant to the Biennial's theme. This incident was considered provocative and yet added excitement to this state-approved Biennial exhibition, reflecting that China's official art space has become more experimental.

⁶⁴ Randian, "Why Care about the Shanghai Biennale," *Randian*, Dec. 15, 2010. http://www.randian-online.com/np_feature/why-care-about-the-shanghai-biennale/?disp=print

2.1 GU Wenda's *Lost Dynasty*

Embracing avant-garde ideas and techniques, Gu Wenda is one of the influential conceptual artists from the '85 New Wave movement. He invents new writing by deconstructing traditional Chinese characters and misplacing specific Chinese strokes or components. Chinese calligraphy has served as a unifying vehicle for Chinese emperors to keep political control over the vastly spread population for more than three thousand years. A unified writing system allows communication and message delivery across diverse regions and dialects in China's expanding territory. Incorporating the stone stele script – a writing style that emerged from the Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE) – Gu Wenda's pseudo characters and scripts bear a striking resemblance to traditional Chinese characters: containing the strokes, traces, and aesthetics of ink calligraphy. In *the Lost Dynasty*, Gu Wenda's pseudo-calligraphy imitates familiar Chinese characters but does not convey meanings (Image 3-4).

Gu Wenda's calligraphy recalled ancient Chinese stone steles and tombstones, but when Gu put up the calligraphic installation, the display has a compelling visual power and violence of the reminiscent big-character posters [*dazibao*]. During the Cultural Revolution, the big-character posters were written by hand and mounted on the wall with enlarged characters for communication and mobilization of the working class.⁶⁵ These posters were the tools of red propaganda against the “class enemy” or the communist party's rivals, while many intellectuals were labeled as the “rightists” and persecuted in

⁶⁵ See, also, Hua Sheng, "Big character posters in China." *Columbia Journal of Asian Law*. 4 (1990): 234.

the Revolution. However, Gu Wenda's calligraphic installation is unreadable, but only serves for artistic purposes.

Gu Wenda's reinventing, or deforming, Chinese writings also provokes the history of the communist party simplifying Chinese characters as the official writing system in China since the Revolution. It is important to note that Taiwan's government continues to preserve the traditional Chinese writing system in public education until today. Two different writing systems in Taiwan and China indicate divergent cultural systems shaped by geopolitical tensions across the Strait.

3. *Shanghai Spirit: The 2000 Shanghai Biennale*

Guiding by the internationally renowned curators Hou Hanru and Toshio Shimizu, the 2000 Shanghai Biennale invited international artists for the first time. The Chinese title *Shang Hai Hai Shang* carries additional meanings beyond the English one – more than simply “Shanghai spirit,” *Shang Hai Hai Shang* means “above the seas” and implies looking beyond the ocean toward the world.⁶⁶ In this sense, this exhibition represented Shanghai as China's “gateway to the globe.” The 2000 Shanghai Biennale included many multimedia, digital, experimental, and new-genre works. Echoing Shanghai's unique cosmopolitan vibe, the “Shanghai spirit” can also be interpreted as “haipai”⁶⁷ in Mandarin Chinese, referring to an open-minded and adventurous attitude for new cultures and events.

⁶⁶ In Chinese characters, “Shang Hai Hai Shang [上海海上].”

⁶⁷ In Chinese characters, “Haipai [海派].”

Art critics value the 2000 Shanghai Biennale for its scope and vision (e.g., W. Hung 2000, Yeh 2007, Jiang 2008, Gao 2011, Pollack 2018). W. Hung compares the 2000 Shanghai Biennale with the 1989 *China/Avant-Garde* exhibition; both inspired China's contemporary art scene with grander scale and experimental spirits (W. Hung 2000, 94). The 2000 Shanghai Biennale has also inspired other museums in China to accept multimedia installations, performance art, and new genre artwork.

Alongside the 2000 biennial, artists and activists Ai Weiwei and Feng Boyi co-curated an alternative event entitled *Buhezuo Fangshi* (meaning, "Ways of Non-cooperation") with the English title *Fuck Off*: "Some independent curators and artists openly opposed any collaboration with public art institutions, which they considered to be opportunistic and against the spirit of the avant-garde" (W. Hung 2000, 95). This alternative exhibition *Fuck Off* called out artists with provocative performances and artworks in Shanghai's massive, abandoned warehouses; the event directly targeted the state-promoted 2000 Shanghai Biennale. In this alternative curatorial project, Ai Weiwei stated that contemporary Chinese art's avant-garde spirit should not be institutionalized.⁶⁸ But Wu Hung considers the *Fuck Off* event as not truly provocative: "the organizers of *Fuck Off* also practiced certain self-censorship to ensure the show's realization, eliminating and restricting some art projects that might provoke a cancellation" (2000, 95).

Ai Weiwei's outspoken attitude has made him highly visible in global art and contemporary cultural circles. He is one of the most influential artists on the Power 100 list selected by *ArtReview* for fifteen years straight from 2006 to 2021, topping the list in

⁶⁸ See, also, Melissa Chiu, "On Ai Weiwei." *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 83, no. 1 (2016): 175-177. muse.jhu.edu/article/620880.

2011 and six times above the top ten.⁶⁹ Ai Weiwei has been the pioneering advocator for Chinese artists to join the international art scene and initiated Beijing's East Village – an art cluster for experimental artists' gatherings – while often criticizing China's social issues and human rights abuses within his cultural projects.

3.1 HUANG Yongping's *Bank of Sand or Sand of Bank*

For the 2000 Shanghai Biennale, artist Huang Yongping built a large installation with dry sand and let it collapse in the museum (Image 5). His *Bank of Sand or Sand of Bank* was a replica of Shanghai's landmark Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) building, a prototype architecture that experienced Shanghai's drastic transition. The same building was the Communist People's Municipal Government from the 1950s to 1990s, then it was remodeled to become the headquarter of Pudong Development Bank in the 1990s, and it is now the HSBC.

The fragility of the replica signifies how money and desire gradually dissolve and break down. Hou Hanru, the curator who invited Huang to the Shanghai Biennial, comments on Huang's work: "he [Huang Yongping] was concerned with questions of spirituality and divinity, but also covered geopolitics, providing an alternative viewpoint on the world."⁷⁰ Since the 1980s, Huang Yongping has been a leading member of the *Xiamen Dada*, a group of Chinese avant-garde artists applying Dadaist creativity to their artwork with subject matter on China's politics. Showing the collapse of a bank in the

⁶⁹ See Art Review, "Ai Weiwei in Power 100," *Art Review*. Last accessed December 26, 2021. <https://artreview.com/artist/ai-weiwei/?year=2021>.

⁷⁰ Gareth Harris, "Chinese Artist and Provocateur Huang Yong Ping," *artnewspaper*, October 21, 2019. <https://rb.gy/ydix9h>.

Biennial, Huang criticizes China's rapid and problematic economic growth with profit-driven materialism but without a solid spiritual foundation.

4. XIANG Liqing's *Rock Never* at the 2002 Shanghai Biennale

Under the title *Urban Creation*, artists in the 2002 Shanghai Biennale took inspiration from Shanghai's history over the last century, and explored gentrification and unbalanced development between urban and rural area.⁷¹ Shanghai's rapid urbanization with emerging skyscrapers and museums was part of the city's five-year municipal project, as China's official record shows that urban development demonstrates "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," according to Deng Xiaoping's guideline for China's economic reform since 1982.⁷²

However, in Xiang Liqing's large-scale photo *Rock Never* (Image 6), the overcrowded residential apartments conjure a sense of claustrophobia. A vast urbanization process in Shanghai demands to tear down old structures to make room for new buildings. The seemingly endless construction and reconstruction procedures constantly change China's urban skyline. Xiang Liqing's photography of these overly packed residential buildings implies authoritarian control over people's life and activities.

⁷¹ The 2002 Shanghai Biennale included a retrospective exhibition *Shanghai Hundred Historic Architectures*. See Power Station of Art (PSA), "Urban Creation: The 4th Shanghai Biennale," *Power Station of Art*. <https://www.powerstationofart.com/whats-on/programs/shanghai-biennale-2002/home>.

⁷² Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), PRC. "Deng Xiaoping's Talk at the Opening of Chinese Communist Party's 12th National Conference [deng Xiaoping zai zhongguo gongchandong di shierci chyuanguo daibiao dahui de kaimuci]," Original Talk on September 1, 1982. *Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, PRC*. Reposted October 2017. https://www.ccdi.gov.cn/special/19da/lcddh_19da/12da_19da/201710/t20171013_108926.html.

Through an image of urban China, Xiang Liqing multiplies the gated structures and repetitive patterns. The standardized architecture represents a regulated lifestyle on the surface, but the still image hints at state violence and people's silenced depression. Residents of these complexes are almost unnoticeable, occasionally peeking out from barred windows for fresh air. The artist emphasizes the redundant gated structures, orderly and yet cramped. The photographic image evokes the noise of a construction site that burdens our senses: electric saws, drills, and jackhammers. These high-rise apartments of dull color lack almost any distinguishing characteristics, symbolizing the boredom of urban reality; This still image *Rock Never* condemns China's vast urbanization process.

5. Cao Fei's *Whose Utopia?* at the 2010 Shanghai Biennale

The 2010 Shanghai Biennale *Rehearsal* gathered performance elements in a visual art event. According to the Biennial Foundation's official website: "'*Rehearsal*' is not a metaphor for a form of exhibition, but a way of thinking and operating strategy."⁷³ The Shanghai Biennale also adopted the wording from governmental projects in the exhibition's five acts: "Act I. Ho Chi Minh Trail, in cooperation with the Long March Project; Act II. A Guiding Light, in cooperation with PERFORMA; Act III. Rehearsal, in Shanghai Art Museum; Act IV. Theory and Practice of Socialist Self-Management:

⁷³ See Biennial Foundation. "The Biennale Defines Itself As A 'Rehearsal', As A Reflective Space of Performance." *Biennial Foundation*. October 2010. <https://www.biennialfoundation.org/2010/10/8331/>.

Yugoslav Case, in cooperation with the radical curatorial group WHW; Act V. West Heavens: India-China Summit on Social Thought.”⁷⁴

In this Biennial, female artist Cao Fei presented a multimedia project entitled *Whose Utopia?* (Image 7), which responded to performance aspects of the *Rehearsal*. She visited the Osram factory in Guangdong province and interviewed factory laborers to understand their working routine and these workers’ dreams. Cao Fei included these workers’ drawings about their dreams as the core content of *Whose Utopia*. Using the mechanically arranged factory space as her stage, Cao Fei filmed a twenty-minute video with a touch of her unique sense of humor, a light-hearted “Life is a play” [ren sheng ru xi], a Chinese proverb that Cao Fei adopts for her long-term theatrical projects.⁷⁵ Cao’s “life as a play” performative art practices have often touched on social issues since her early project for a theater troupe at the Guangdong Academy of Fine Arts, and her video project *COS Players* showing playful costume-play photos taken by Chinese youth in urban space. In *Whose Utopia*, Cao Fei reveals the gap between workers’ daily life and dreams; the systematic oppression in pervasive global capital flows. With these socially engaged art projects, Cao Fei has become one of the few contemporary Chinese female artists actively participating in the international biennial scene. Her professional endeavors have gained global media recognition: *ArtReview* included her in the Power 100 most influential art professionals from 2018 until 2021.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Power Station of Art (PSA), “Rehearsal: The 8th Shanghai Biennale,” *Power Station of Art*. <https://www.powerstationofart.com/whats-on/programs/shanghai-biennale-2010/home>.

⁷⁵ In Chinese characters, “Life is a play” [人生如戲]. See, also, Hu Fang, “Cao Fei: Whose Utopia?” Vitamin Creative Space. <http://vitamincreativespace.art/cn/?work=cao-fei-utopia-factory>.

⁷⁶ ArtReview, “Cao Fei in Power 100,” *ArtReview*. Accessed December 2, 2021. <https://artreview.com/artist/cao-fei/?year=2020>.

6. ZHENG Chongbin's *Wall of Skies* at the 2016 Shanghai Biennale

The 2016 Shanghai Biennale recruited the India-based Raqs Media Collective as the curatorial team to show the Biennale's diverse global art perspectives. The curatorial concept was drawn from both Chinese and Indian cultural contexts as stated in the curator's statement: "We found a resonance in Ritwik Ghatak's film 'Jukti, Takko aar Gappo' and in the energy of the cosmic imagination of Cixin Liu's science fiction novel, 'The Three-Body Problem', both of which, as we have stated elsewhere, were points of reference for us while thinking through the Shanghai Biennale."⁷⁷ With the question mark in the curatorial theme, the 2016 biennial *Why Not Ask Again?* encouraged multiple interpretations from the audience. The three sub-themes: "Arguments," "Counter-arguments," and "Stories" are three intellectual "pressure points" for audiences to think about artists' presentation. Raqs Media Collective emphasized that "Ask" is the central concept of this event.

Inspired by the curatorial team Raqs Media Collective's question mark, Zheng Chongbin's *Wall of Skies* (Image 8) recreated Shanghai's scenery along the Pujiang River with a multimedia installation. Zheng set up a large ink painting in numerous folds, hanging between the inclined wall and reflective floor. He combined Chinese ink tradition with abstract style. A set of site-specific installed LED lights shined through the unparalleled lines. The artist also designed a complex folded structure enclosed by the

⁷⁷ Power Station of Art (PSA), "Why Not Ask Again, Again: The 11th Shanghai Biennale," Power Station of Art. <https://www.powerstationofart.com/whats-on/programs/shanghai-biennale-2016/home>.

tilted ceiling, making the LED subtle lighting resemble natural sunlight. In so doing, *Wall of Skies* interplayed artificial lighting dissolved in spatial arrangement. The artificial layers of “sky” challenge viewers to consider various aspects of space: the objective matter versus our subjective perception and the artificial object versus nature. *Wall of Skies* can also be seen as a modern version of a traditional Chinese landscape painting with multiple perspectives. This work confused the viewer’s perspectives of the architectural structure and natural light, another question mark to inspire the audience searching for the answers.

7. Jiu Society’s *Community Estate Project* at the 2018 Shanghai Biennale

The 2018 Shanghai Biennale’s theme, *Proregress - Art in an Age of Historical Ambivalence*, described a motion seemingly moving forward. The Chinese title is *Yubu*, a term for a step in Taoist ritual dance describing the illusion of moving forward but backward.⁷⁸ The chief curator, Cuauhtémoc Medina, wrote, “Our historical horizon is defined by nostalgia and a constant assessment of our relationship with the past” (PSA 2018). Combining two words into one, “*proregress*” suggests an ambiguous movement that challenges the notion of historical linear progression.

The three-member art collective, Jiu Society, transformed the Biennial space into a construction site. Museum-goers entering this space also became the consumers for Jiu Society’s *Community Estate Project* (Image 9). Accompanied by two “sales agents,” the *Community Estate Project* was a furnished apartment including a widescreen television, a sofa, and a small bedroom. The Jiu Society is a collaborative team of three artists —

⁷⁸ In Chinese characters, “Yubu [宇步].”

Fang Di, Ji Hao, and Jin Haofan — all three were born in Shenzhen, a city constructed as “China’s Silicon Valley” with newly emerged digital manufactures and known as the “town for the money-makers” (Pollack 2019). In the 2018 Shanghai Biennale, the Jiu Society shared their unique Shenzhen experience and China’s real-estate boom.

8. Remarks

As addressed at the beginning of this chapter, the Shanghai Biennale aims at the top of the artistic pyramid and to construct a global arena. Since 2000, the Shanghai Biennale included art installations that were not commonly seen at China’s state-promoted exhibitions; contemporary Chinese artists also fluently utilize international visual languages and install their multimedia projects to compete against global artists’ works. These Chinese artists’ visual language infuses with local and global, traditional, and contemporary cultural elements. Their artworks deliver a bold attitude daring to try new ideas, sometimes criticize Chinese government and political issues; and to match with Shanghai’s metropolitan goal and the Biennial’s global ambition, the host museum PSA’s funding municipal government allows Chinese artists a freer space for self-expression.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Mapping the Taipei Biennial

On the front page of the Taipei Biennial's official website, a passage reads:

Over the past decades, TFAM has not only served as a platform to showcase exceptional works from both domestic and foreign artists, but also long become an incubator to engage in-depth exchanges between the Taiwanese and international art ecology. In the recent years, major retrospective of internationally renowned artists from Asia and chronological exhibitions of TFAM collection were held, these include Cai Guo-Qiang: *Hanging Out in the Museum* in 2009, Ai Weiwei: *Absent* in 2011, *View-Point: A Retrospective Exhibition of Li Yuan-chia*, *Xu Bing: A Retrospective* in 2014, and *Formosa in Formation: Selected works from the Taipei Fine Arts Museum Collection* in 2015.⁷⁹

This statement indicates the Taipei Biennial's mission for international networks. The text mentioned artists Cai Guo-Qiang, Ai Weiwei, Li Yuan-chia, and Xu Bing, all Chinese artists from mainland China, but the TFAM chose the phrase "internationally renowned artists from Asia" to describe them. This statement shows that the TFAM carefully locates China as part of Asia—inviting famous contemporary Chinese artists to Taiwan is part of the Taipei Biennial's international outreach, as this positioning cunningly avoids cross-Strait politics. Strengthening Taiwan's global connection has been the Taipei Biennial's mission since 1992 when it was launched. However, the relationship between contemporary Taiwanese artists and Chinese artists is complicated because they are from two regimes of different international stances on the global stage. China's public education teaches Chinese citizens that Taiwan is part of China, while Taiwan's Ministry of Culture

⁷⁹ See The Taipei Fine Art Museum (TFAM), "The Taipei Biennial." *The Taipei Fine Art Museum (TFAM)*. <https://www.taipeibiennial.org/?lang=EN>.

(reformed in 2012) emphasizes Taiwanese local cultural history that includes indigenous cultures and complex elements of Taiwanese cultural identity.

In the Taipei Biennial's three-decade history, the Biennial exhibitions have created a transnational stage in Taiwan's capital. Taiwan's policymakers' work also corresponds to the rise of local cultural awareness. According to the governmental report, Taiwan's Ministry of Culture has implemented the Reconstructing Taiwanese Art History Project (2018) to emphasize Taiwanese art history, local music, indigenous material culture, Taiwanese literature, Taiwanese cinema in public education and the mandatory elementary to the high school system (similar to the K-12 education in the US).⁸⁰ After the millennium, Taiwan's Ministry of Culture incorporated cultural and creative elements as cultural soft power (MOC 2013). MOC's rewriting Taiwan's cultural knowledge is critical to contemporary Taiwanese art's development and, as I discussed in the previous chapters, hosting an international art biennial in Taiwan is a way to position Taiwanese cultural production within the global sphere beyond the island's diplomatic dilemma.

Despite that fact that many English-language art history textbooks categorize Taiwanese art as part of Chinese Art,⁸¹ the following passages focus on contemporary Taiwanese art practices in the Taipei Biennial. Throughout Taiwan's history, the island's complicated geopolitical conditions within regional and expanding global forces – Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, American – and Taiwan's shared history

⁸⁰ See Education, Science and Culture Office at Executive Yuan, Taiwan. "About the Ministry of Culture's Reconstructing Taiwanese Art History Project [Chongjian taiwan yishu shi zhi xing qingxing]," Executive Yuan, Taiwan. Nov. 18, 2021. <https://www.ey.gov.tw/Page/448DE008087A1971/32e97757-eb5a-432e-abe6-aa95d28630e3>.

⁸¹ See Literature Review section in the Introduction.

with Indo-Pacific islands have made Taiwanese hybrid cultural characters, or a “laboratory of identities” (Corcuff 2002, xi). The Taipei Biennial showcases a contemporary Taiwanese cultural project that includes international artists’ works; however, this chapter only focuses on Taiwanese artists’ visual expressions in the Biennial and explores how these artworks enunciate Taiwan’s unique history and cultural formations.

1. Setting the Ground for the Taipei Biennial

From 1984 to 1991, the Taipei Fine Arts Museum hosted a series of exhibition projects: the *Contemporary Sculpture in the ROC* exhibition (1985-1991), the *Contemporary Art Trends in the ROC* exhibition (1984-1986), and the *Modern Arts New Prospects* exhibition (1988-1994).⁸² In 1992, the TFAM launched a major exhibition entitled *The Contemporary Art Biennial Exhibition* as the precursor of the Taipei Biennial. A professional jury conference selected the participating artists. In 1996, the TFAM replaced its previous jury-selection process with six Taiwanese art professionals to curate a themed exhibition (PY Lu 2017, 106). Entitled *The Quest for Identity*, the 1996 Taipei Biennial corresponded to Taiwanese cultural awareness trying to escape from and differentiating with the homogenized Chinese identity. These themes deliver political values that circulate in a newly built Taiwanese cultural industry.

Table 4 organizes the themes of the Taipei Biennial from 1992 to 2020, and shows how the Taipei Biennial’s various editions often reflect Taiwan’s contemporary

⁸² The Republic of China (ROC) is the official name of Taiwan.

cultural and social issues, which often correspond to the global art biennial scene, sometimes with experimental and multi-disciplinary approaches (TFAM 1998-2020). With an international art biennial scope, the Taipei Biennial designs public events for audiences to experience the biennial exhibitions in different venues outside of the museum, expanding the notion of an exhibition beyond conventional museum display (Lai 2008, CT Wu 2009, Cheng 2012). Such spatial practices have become a typical curatorial design for many editions of the Taipei Biennial.

2. Networking with East Asia: The 1998 Taipei Biennial

The 1998 Taipei Biennial invited Japanese curator Fumio Nanjo and the exhibition extended to an international scale. Entitled “Site of Desire,” this Biennial presented thirty-six East Asian artists from South Korea, Japan, and China, in addition to Taiwanese artists. These invitees reflected Fumio Nanjo’s curatorial idea of “a pan-Asian perspective.” According to Nanjo’s curatorial statement:

Asia’s cities are seeking a new post-colonial identity as they sculpt modernity. Its economies have grown, heated up and contracted. Its politics are in turmoil and its democracies are beginning to take on unique shapes. All of these aspects are also a sign of Asia’s dynamism. Tradition is being re-examined and reborn as well as being creatively transmitted. Western modernity is learned from, studied, copied, and denied.⁸³

Nanjo’s narrative was echoed to the TFAM’s international outreach goal, as the TFAM’s first step of connecting with the international art scene was to cooperate with Nanjo as well as the Northeast Asian contemporary art scene. That is, the TFAM’s first-time

⁸³ See "1998 Taipei Biennial: Site of Desire," Taipei Fine Arts Museum, June 1998. <https://www.taipeibiennial.org/1998>.

strategic recruitment of a “foreign” curator matched the Biennial’s mission: putting Taiwan on the global art map.

However, Taiwan’s art circle has various opinions about this curatorial strategy. CC Wei comments on the Taipei Biennial’s policy inviting a foreign curator with a neutral tone:

In 1998 the Japanese curator Nanjo Fumio was invited to curate the Taipei Biennial...The format of the biennial was introduced for several reasons: to react to the situation after the lifting of martial law, to break down unified aesthetics and to function as a platform for intellectual and cultural interpretations of the transformation era. (Wei 2013, 473)

By contrast, PY Lu interprets the Biennial “in favor of” the Japanese curator: “since its inception in 1996, the Taipei Biennial has endured a series of changes in its curatorial mechanism. It started with a collective of Taiwanese curators, but this arrangement was discarded in 1998 in favor of a single Japanese curator” (Lu 2017, 105).

Under the theme *Site of Desire* of the 1998 Taipei Biennial, artist Chun-ming Hou rediscovered Taiwanese traditional woodblock printing – a unique technique, but today only a few local artists are guardians of this fragile tradition. Taiwanese ritual practice has similar origins with southern China’s tradition, but there are profound and diverse temple rituals preserved in Taiwan because Taiwanese enjoy religious freedom without experiencing communist’s anti-religious persecution. In Chun-ming Hou’s project, he adopted local temple rituals: worshipping deities for fortune-telling and receiving the deities’ messages through fortune sticks. But against most religious notion that God equals love, the artist recreated deities’ messages in his woodblock print with a provoking title: *God Hates You* (Image 9). On the fortune sticks, he wrote sarcastic texts about contemporary social issues, such as workaholic, obesity, extramarital affairs. These

fortune messages were printed in the black-ink texts and bright colored backgrounds for visual tension – the artist appropriated Taiwanese woodblock printing aesthetics to deliver cynical messages.

3. Expansion beyond Asia: The 2000 Taipei Biennial

Unlike the deliberate emphasis on the East Asian perspectives in the 1998 Taipei Biennial, the 2000 exhibition took a broader approach and explored various trends of global culture, including how contemporary art practices engage with social and political projects. According to the statement by curators Manray Hsu and Jérôme Sans: “our contemporary lifestyle has evolved to complex social issues, such as border-crossings, identity, and gender diversities. The complexity becomes our identities as we live in a remix culture, an era with a boundless field of reactivation. The sky has no limit.”⁸⁴ Their words presented an ambition to reach out globally as “the sky has no limit.” This exhibition also invited a much broader range of international artists: thirty artists from more than twenty countries, connecting the Taipei Biennial beyond the Asian art scene.

In this 2000 Taipei Biennial, Taiwanese artist Michael Ming-hong Lin subverted the TFAM museum space by painting on the ground. Lin painted the exhibition hall’s floor with the pattern of ornamented Taiwanese traditional bedcover (Image 10) and welcomed audiences stepping on his painting; these flower patterns evoke a sense of domesticity and Taiwanese nostalgia. To the Taiwanese household in the 1960s, Lin’s fabric was an ordinary daily-use material, but showing these textile patterns in an art

⁸⁴ The Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), the 2000 Taipei Biennial. *The Taipei Fine Arts Museum*. https://www.taipeibiennial.org/2000/index_e.html.

biennial, the traditional Taiwanese bedcover transforms into art. “The installation design has consistently and increasingly sought to isolate objects for the concentrated gaze of the aesthetic adept and to suppress as irrelevant other meanings the objects might have” (Duncan 1995, 16). Duncan’s analysis emphasizes the visual display in a museum setting would powerfully transform any objects to “art.”

Following Duncan’s viewpoint, the image of ordinary bedcover with Taiwanese local aesthetics has gained artistic value because the image travels to the museum space. For audiences of various cultural backgrounds, the Taiwanese textile has different meanings than the traditional one: the tropical flowers and auspicious phoenixes symbolize happiness and honeymoon. This enlarged Taiwanese textile becoming a floor painting in a contemporary art exhibition might also suggest a fabrication of Taiwanese cultural memories. With the painted Taiwanese fabric intervening in the museum space and making audiences view “art” on the ground, Lin’s site-specific project became a social space for contemplating its artistic values.

4. The Absence of Taiwanese Curator of the 2004 Taipei Biennial

“My absence was to declare that my expectations failed to be satisfied; the conflict with the other curator during the exhibition preparation forced me to recognize an urgent issue—our degrading cultural stance—which in turn revealed a more complicated and cruel truth. We were in a weak position in this exhibition.”

- Amy Huei-hua Cheng, the 2004 Taipei Biennial Curator ⁸⁵

⁸⁵ See Amy Huei-hua Cheng, “How Can We Face the Reality? The Declaration of Absence in the Taipei Biennial Opening” in *Amy’s Mumble Bumble (blog)*. Oct. 26, 2004. <https://rb.gy/ev8d00>; and Pei-Yi Lu, “Why Don’t We Sing? Rethinking the Curatorial Mechanisms of the Taipei Biennial for the First Twenty Years (1996-2016).” *Art Theory and Field*, no. 24. (2017): 104-126.

This statement is from Cheng's curatorial concept, published on her website, which she refused to print in the 2004 Taipei Biennial catalog. Cheng's absence highlighted that this exhibition could not fulfill her mission to represent Taiwan's art and cultural subjectivity faithfully. The Taiwanese art scene responded to this incident and supported Cheng. CT Wu alerts that the international curator(s) lacked local cultural understanding, though they were well-connected with the global art biennial trend. CT Wu alerts: "The people who curate most of the biennials these days, on the other hand, are constantly on the move. Jetting in and out of likely locations, they have no time to assimilate, still less to understand, the artistic production in any one place" (CT Wu 2009, 113). PY Lu also responds, "the absence of Taiwanese curator in the Taipei Biennial mirrors the loss of being able to sing a song for oneself on one's own stage, which responds to the question 'Why Don't We Sing?'" (PY Lu 2017, 122).

One Taiwanese artist's performance in the 2004 Taipei Biennial, correspondingly or not, revealed the frustration of confronting the invisible social system. In *Eighteen Copper Guardians in Shaolin Temple* (Image 11), Kuang-yu Tsui assumed himself as one of the Taiwanese legend "copper guardians" with a muscular and indestructible figure. Referencing a famous Taiwanese folktale, "copper guardians," a story about eighteen fictional martial-art masters, Kuang-yu Tsui videotaped himself striking his head on the walls, trees, cows, cars, and other objects in a public space. His absurd performance – using his body as a medium repeatedly striking any objects he saw, almost like a compulsive behavior but only failed – ridicules the effort to change reality.

5. The 2006 Taipei Biennial *Dirty Yoga*

The joint curators of the 2006 Taipei Biennial, Jun-Jieh Wang and Dan Cameron, proposed *Dirty Yoga* to examine several conflicting ideas, such as greed and fear, ugliness and beauty, mobility, and settlement. According to their statement:

The artists invited to this Taipei Biennial participated in different forms in a discourse of ‘between-ness’ that produces hybrid, mutated, nomadic meanings that are always contingent, and often subject to multiple interpretations, just as the noun ‘between-ness’ suggests a state of possessing two meanings and neither of those meanings at the same time. While the state of ‘between-ness,’ like a utopia, may never be realized, it often leads to the possibility of understanding and recognition through some kind of confrontation, like that implied by the meanings of the words ‘restricted’ and ‘dirty’ in our daily lives.⁸⁶

This brief passage in the curatorial narrative has discussed “meanings” three times, highlighting how the curators tried to insert meaningful values into the Biennial. In *Asia Art Archive’s* reportage, the 2006 Taipei Biennial’s “curatorial concept and angle brings new revelations and food for thought for viewers: the present connotations of ‘yoga’ are unlike those of ‘going back to nature.’ Instead, it has become a ‘global commodity’ through commercial marketing.”⁸⁷ From this reportage, the Taipei Biennial presented people living in Taipei as a globalized community sharing similar urban issues and values with many global cities.

Under the theme “Dirty Yoga,” artists explored new urban lifestyles, such as organic food, spiritual renewal, and the contrast between human existence and artificial intelligence. For example, Shu Lea Cheang envisions a dystopic digital environment. The description of their digital artwork addresses: “By the year 2030 – Your mobile is locked,

⁸⁶ The Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM), "The Taipei Biennial 2006: Curatorial Statement," The Taipei Fine Arts Museum. <https://www.taipeibiennial.org/2006/main-e.html>.

⁸⁷ Asia Art Archive, "2006 Taipei Biennial: Dirty Yoga," *Asia Art Archive*. <https://aaa.org.hk/en/collections/search/library/2006-taipei-biennial-dirty-yoga-2006>.

your network is blocked, your roaming is barred. By the year 2030 – You own a porta-pack, you own the network, you are on the RUN.” This is Shu Lea Cheang’s project porta2030. As a digital artist specializing in internet-based projects, Cheang worked with Ilze Black and Alexei Blinov as a three-member art group, Take2030. They envisioned a dystonic digitized future and created porta2030, an outfit with a portable wi-fi network system, a webcam, a signal-generation device, and a GPS tracking unit (Image 12). At the TFAM space during the Taipei Biennial 2006, Shu Lea Cheang set up a porta2030 workshop at the Biennial exhibition space for visitors to experience a decentralized “Wifitopia.”⁸⁸

6. *Untitled*, and Overlapping Invitees: The 2008 and 2010 Taipei Biennials

In the 2008 Taipei Biennial, curators Manray Hsu and Vasif Kortun invited many artists who are also activists, including Superflex, The Yes Men, Oliver Ressler. The exhibition poster was designed on advertising boards installed at Taipei’s street corners, showing that the curators intended to merge the art biennial with the public’s everyday life. These arrangements positioned the 2008 Taipei Biennial as an institutional critique of what makes the art biennial distinct from other exhibition formats (TFAM 2008). A sub-event Taipei Drift project gathered twelve art academies from different countries working together during the Biennial. The 2008 Taipei Biennial also strategically partnered with the Shanghai Biennale and the Guangzhou Triennial for global outreach. Lai observes:

⁸⁸ See DSL Collection, "Shu Lea Cheang," G1 Expo, <http://www.g1expo.com/artists.php?id=77>.

Organizers find creative ways to team up with different parties, networks, and institutes to increase the impact of the show. The Biennial partners with two other city biennials, namely the Shanghai Biennale and the GZ [Guangzhou] Triennial, to create a communication platform among cities and people and engage in branding efforts to enhance cultural capital. (Lai 2008, 105)

The 2008 Taipei Biennial's cross-biennial network with the Shanghai Biennale could also be seen as cross-Taiwan Strait cooperation, based on both Biennials curators' friendship, disregarding the fact that the Taipei Biennial and the Shanghai Biennale have been conditioned in competitive relations based on each government's policies.

The 2010 Taipei Biennials did not have a theme but shared an overlapping list of international invitees with the 2008 edition. According to the 2010 Taipei Biennial curatorial concept, the *Untitled* exhibition was meant to encourage the artists to rediscover the meanings of "Biennial" itself.⁸⁹ However, there were artists overlapping both the 2008 and 2010 Taipei Biennials. Five of thirty-eight artists in the 2010 Taipei Biennial were invited back from the 2008 edition: Lara Almarcegui, Burak Delier, Irwin, Superflex, and Allan Sekula.⁹⁰

Other similarities between the 2008 and 2010 Taipei Biennials included the fact that both Biennials emphasized artists being the activists, and the curators tried to transform the museum space for activists' social gatherings. Different opinions and responses include Ying-ying Lai's comments on the 2008 Taipei Biennial that "the war of globalization" as a core concept behind the biennial" (Lai 2008, 104). Curator of the

⁸⁹ The Taipei Fine Art Museum (TFAM), "The 2010 Taipei Biennial," *The Taipei Fine Art Museum*. <https://www.taipeibiennial.org/2010/tb2010.html>.

⁹⁰ See The Taipei Fine Art Museum (TFAM), "The Artists at the 2008 Taipei Biennial," The Taipei Fine Art Museum (TFAM). <https://rb.gy/luaxs0>. and The Taipei Fine Art Museum (TFAM), "The Artists at the 2010 Taipei Biennial," The Taipei Fine Art Museum (TFAM). <https://www.taipeibiennial.org/2010/artist.html>.

2002 Taipei Biennial Chia Chi (Jason) Wang also commented on the 2010 Taipei Biennial that its preference for politics over aesthetics is questionable.⁹¹

7. The Absence of Taiwanese Curators of the 2012-2016 Taipei Biennials

From 2012 to 2016, there were three editions of the Taipei Biennial guided by one international curator. Taiwan's art circle concerns the Biennial's favoring foreign curators conflicting with its mission to boost Taiwan's cultural subjectivity. For example, in "Biennials without Borders," published in *New Left Review*, CT Wu describes her personal experience of encountering the Taipei Biennial curator Barbara Vanderlinden:

I had been kept waiting for more than three hours for what turned out to be a crisp thirty-minute interview with one of the two curators of the show, the Brussels-based Barbara Vanderlinden. I kicked off by asking her to explain the curatorial policy regarding the number – five – of native Taiwanese artists chosen to appear. She replied by curtly throwing a question of her own back at me: 'Do you know how many Taiwanese artists were represented in the Shanghai Biennial?' Meaning, of course, that five local representatives seemed to her quite adequate, thank you very much, and people would certainly be wrong to expect more (CT Wu 2009, 107).

CT Wu stresses that international curators, though they are familiar with the art biennial politics, they can be inadequate for curating the Taipei Biennial due to a lack of local knowledge and Taiwanese art scene to select the artists. Similar criticism is shown in the essay "Why Don't We Sing? Rethinking the Curatorial Mechanisms of the Taipei Biennial for the First Twenty Years (1996-2016)," the author PY Lu reveals:

The original two purposes of the Two-Curator Mechanism were to internationalize the exhibition and to cultivate local curators in Taiwan. However, this curatorial mechanism was seriously criticized because it had lost its original

⁹¹ See Chia Chi (Jason) Wang, "The 2010 Taipei Biennial," *LEAP issue 6*, 2010. <https://rb.gy/6ttwdm>

strategic concern, which was for the curators to learn from each other on an equal footing (PY Lu 2017, 112).

7.1 Chung-li KAO's *The Taste of Human Flesh* at the 2012 Taipei Biennial

Despite the curatorial incidence, Taiwanese artists participating in the Taipei Biennial continually rediscover Taiwan's complicated cultural formation and historical past through their art practices. In the 2012 Taipei Biennial, artist Chung-Li Kao traced his father's traumatic experiences during the Chinese civil war and presented a multimedia installation, including an image of his father's gunshot wound in the head. The artist's father survived combatting with Chinese communists when he served for the KMT army in the Xubang area. Beginning with the phrase "me, a bullet," Chung-Li Kao's *The Taste of Human Flesh* is a historical re-imagination. In this work, Kao included an X-ray picture of the bullet lodged in his father's head (Image 13). Alongside other images related to the Chinese civil war, the bullet symbolizes a historical moment, the combative ROC-PRC relation, and Chung-li Kao's family history across the Taiwan Strait.

7.2 Po-Chih HUANG's *Production Line* at the 2014 Taipei Biennial

At the 2014 Taipei Biennial exhibition hall, several semi-finished denim blouses hung near the entrance alongside several sewing machines—a clothing factory was in the museum space (Image 14). Artist Po-Chih Huang set up a *Production Line* and invited the audience to work on the sewing machines, experiencing the factory worker's daily routine. The artist took inspiration from his mother, one of the millions of unidentifiable factory laborers working on the assembly line. Many Taiwanese clothing factory workers

were laid off after China joined the WTO, as Taiwan's clothing industries were hollowed out and moved to China for cheaper labor (Feigenbaum 2020). Huang's installation made Taiwanese factory workers' lives visible and relatable to museum-goers by allowing them to visualize factory life under the international capitalists' control over the shifting global supply chains.

7.3 Chia-Wei HSU's *Spirit-Writing* at the 2016 Taipei Biennial

Chia-wei Hsu's *Spirit-Writing* presented a Matsu local temple ritual with video screening at the 2016 Taipei Biennial (Image 15). The Matsu islands belong to the Republic of China (Taiwan) territory but are adjacent to mainland China. The artist's choice of filming location, Matsu, indicates the complex geopolitical connection between Taiwan and China.

Hsu developed a scenario based on Matsu's local rituals, folklore, and fictional narratives. The video traces a folktale about a local deity enshrined in a village temple where villagers seek approval for important decisions through religious ceremonies, such as spiritual divination writing or fortune-telling. The artist followed the "spirit-writing" ritual and recorded the deity's response as his video's storyline. Chia-wei Hsu's *Spirit-Writing* was akin to a documentary of Matsu's local cultural practices, including the script and storyline, which were partially written by the deity's spirit-writing. As he composes the whole project, the filming process has become the subject matter. The artist combined the oral history method and video narrative to show a story mixed with myth and folklore.

7.4 Fei-hao CHEN's *Family Albums in Translation* at the 2016 Taipei Biennial

Chen's family albums are documents of Taiwanese fragmented historical memories: he collects family photos from the Japanese era (1895-1945), the Chiang Kai-shek's KMT era (1949-1975), and the post-martial-law era. The word in the title, "translation," is the key to decoding this photo installation. The artist wrote the descriptions for each photo in Chinese and then translated the texts into Japanese. In Japanese translation, Chen crossed out Japanese characters in hiragana and katakana, only keeping Japanese *kanji* (Chinese characters). Through this translating and erasing process, Chen created fractured sentences in awkward Japanese and Chinese, but neither in both languages. This unusual narrative reflects distinctive Taiwanese cultural hybridity and obscurity.

One photo in this installation, titled *The National Language Textbooks*, conveys a shared cultural experience among Taiwanese elders who grew up in Japanese ruled era. Chen juxtaposed two original textbooks on National Language used in Taiwan's elementary schools, one in Japanese before WWII and the other in Chinese after the war. An interesting visual contrast showed in the illustrations of these two textbooks — The Japanese National Language textbook featured schoolchildren watching the Japanese flag-raising ceremony in the morning; in comparison, the Chinese National Language textbook depicted elementary school kids waving the Republic of China flags. In less than half a century, Taiwanese people had to learn and assume two very different national and cultural identities imposed by the changing ruling authority.

8. *Post-Nature — A Museum as an Ecosystem*: The 2018 Taipei Biennial

In the 2018 biennial, curators Mali Wu and Francesco Manacorda invited artists to brainstorm solutions for Taiwan's environmental issues with an eco-feminist approach.⁹² As Mali Wu wrote in her curatorial idea: "Every environmental problem is a cultural problem." Taiwan encounters various ecological crises like many countries worldwide because of industrialization and urban development. Many participating artists of the Taipei Biennial utilized digital technology and designed digital applications for monitoring the museum's surroundings. Taiwanese female artist Chen Chu-Yin plays the role of an artist and a female scientist leading a technology team, Solar Insects Vivarium. She reinvented a *Neo Eden*, which is an ironic revision of the biblical Eden, but without Eve, the female protagonist symbolizes the downfall of a woman. The female figure here is the artist herself as a creator. Chen Chu-Yin assembled digital chips and wires to build an artificial vivarium. *Neo Eden* consists of artificial insects made from electronic parts and powered by solar panels; none of these creatures have a real life. Visitors can feed these insects with "light" to make them "alive." This "unnatural" *Neo Eden* reflects that human civilization has become increasingly digitized, with artificial environments gradually taking over our mother nature.

9. Remarks

Taiwan's art circle's comments on the Taipei Biennial are critical yet constructive. Reviewing the Taipei Biennial's themes, Ying-ying Lai observes: "every thematic subject of the Taipei Biennial presents the Taiwanese audience with critical Issues that really matter in this day and age, offering them a glimpse of international

⁹² Eco-feminism is not to exclude male, but about gender equality, eco-feminism is not about humans only, but views humans as animals interconnected with the nature. We humans are not to conquer the nature, we are nurtured by our mother nature.

contemporary arts while they shuffle in and out of the displaying spectacles and trendy fashions” (Lai 2008, 108). PY Lu investigates the Taipei Biennial’s curatorial system in chronological order: from a collective of Taiwanese curators (1996), to the first foreign (Japanese) curator (1998), then adopted the duo-curator system to invite one international curator working with one Taiwanese curator (2000-2010), and then return to inviting one international curator (2012-2016). Lu writes:

Even though the first priority of the TB [Taipei Biennial] was to build self-identity and to prepare a stage for performance, its follow-up development indicates the fact that, from the hidden subordinate relationship which applied to the Two-Curator Mechanism to the Single-(Western)-Curator Mechanism, the TB has demonstrated a strong preference toward the (Euro-Americancentric) international (Lu 2017, 120).

Reviewing the Taipei Biennial, CT Wu further points out the art biennial’s geopolitical meanings:

The question of national affiliation is critical to what the biennial (or triennial, or quinquennial) has come to stand for since the 1980s. In increasingly popular institutional structure for the staging of large-scale exhibitions – some observers refer to ‘the biennialisation of the contemporary art world’ – the biennial is generally understood as an international festival of contemporary art occurring once every two years (CT Wu 2009, 107).

These comments reflect that the Biennial’s selection of curators has its geopolitical consideration to connect with the global art scene through foreign curators’ networks to enhance the event’s international visibility (Cheng 2004, Lai 2008, Lu 2017). To view the Biennial’s geopolitical mapping, Table 6 and Table 7 show the origins of international curators in the Taipei Biennial and the Shanghai Biennale. In Table 6, the 1992-2020 Taipei Biennials’ thirteen international curators’ nationalities and regions: more than half (nine out of thirteen) are from Europe; among these European curators, five are from France. Among the non-European curators, two curators are from

the Middle East, one from Asia, and one from North America. This list indicates the Taipei Biennial's interest in networking with the European, and particularly French contemporary art scene. In comparison, Table 7 shows that the Shanghai Biennial's international curators are more evenly recruited from different continents: five are from Asia, six from North and South America, and nine from Europe; these nine European curators are from seven different countries.

Additionally, the Taiwanese artists' works at the Taipei Biennial reflect Taiwan's unique geopolitical situation, complex historical and cultural backgrounds. Some of them also tackle similar contemporary issues, such as urbanization or globalization, as their Chinese artist-counterparts. For instance, both Po-Chih Huang (Taiwanese artist in the 2014 Taipei Biennial) and Cao Fei (Chinese artist in the 2010 Shanghai Biennale) are concerned about factory workers' daily life under the global supply chain. Cao Fei reveals the systematic oppression in factory life; her interviews with the workers expose the gap between the laborers' dreams and real life. In comparison, Po-Chih Huang rebuilt a clothing production line at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum and invited the museum-goers to work on the sewing machine and live with a laborer's everyday routine. The inspiration for this work was the artist's mother, a clothing laborer being laid off because many Taiwan factories moved to China for cheaper labor.

Among them, Taiwanese female artists, Shu Lea Cheang and Chen Chu-Yin, present digital art installations that correspond to Taiwan's cultural soft power policy incorporating the development of digital industries. I highlight these female digital artists' projects with an intention to show that technology should be gender neutral. As the director-general of UNESCO, Irina Bokova shares the UN Women's vision to close

the gender gap in digital technology, she addresses that the first step of gender equality in society is to cultivate women and girls to engage in digital industries; access to digital technology is critical for women's human rights, particularly technology has become an essential part of daily life and human existence.⁹³

These female artists' creativity echo to my emphasis on female authorship in the art world. Chapter Five further examines the long-standing gender issue in the art history, and the much fewer female curators in the contemporary art biennial scene.

⁹³ See United Nations Geneva (UN Geneva). (2021). The gender digital divide is a reflection of the overall discrimination faced by women and girls. *United Nations Human Rights Council*. HRC21.127E, 27 September. <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/meeting-summary/2021/09/la-fracture-numerique-entre-les-sexes-est-le-reflet-de-la/>.

CHAPTER FIVE:

The Art Biennial's Female Curatorship

As the competition among international art biennials intensifies, the curator has come into the spotlight as the soul of the art show. A curator's primary role is to create a space to bring art to the public eye. Curating an art exhibition involves passion for art, vision for the best art performances, choosing artwork with care, and arranging the exhibition to tell a story. The curator can experiment with new ideas, new media, new contexts, and plays a crucial role in defining contemporary art (e.g., Brenson 1998, Obrist 2003, Thea and Micchelli 2009). In the art biennial exhibition, the curator is also a tastemaker and the cue-giver of the best artwork, engaging in a complex process of constant negotiation and cooperation.

The art biennials' competition reflects power dynamics in the global art scene. However, the first female curator of the international art biennial scene appeared in 2005, more than a century after the first Venice Biennial in 1895. Table 13 shows the first female curators who appeared in the Venice Biennale and the Bienal de São Paulo, the first two longest art biennials. These female curators are often teamed together, instead of taking complete control of one independent exhibition. Until today, female curators are still much fewer than their male counterparts. Why are there fewer female curators in the art biennials?

This chapter focuses on female curatorship, reviews female art historians' scholarship, and examines contemporary art biennial curators' duties. At the core of this

chapter, I interviewed the two Taiwanese female curators who took charge of the Taipei Biennial, Amy Huei-hua Cheng and Mali Wu, featuring their life-long dedication to art and curatorial practices as female authorship of global art knowledge production.

1. Why Have There Been Not Many Female Curators?

Curating an exhibition is a form of knowledge production. However, this knowledge is biased because art-biennial leadership is still predominantly male. The first female biennial curator did not appear until 110 years after the first Venice Biennale was launched. In 2005, María de Corral and Rosa Martínez were appointed to co-curate the Venice Biennale (See Table 12). The international art biennials' curators are still mostly male (UiU 2021). In the case of the Taipei Biennial, only two Taiwanese female curators have taken the chief curatorial role in the Taipei Biennial's two-decade history (See Table 4).

Why have there been not many women curators? My question adds to art historian Linda Nochlin's (1971) inquiry, "Why have there been not many women artists?" The gender imbalance in art biennial leadership reflects the longstanding biased condition in art history. According to *Feminist Aesthetics*, women artists were discouraged from public and social activities in patriarchal societies at a time when public exposure was considered unfeminine, and a division of gender roles confined the female workforce to the private sphere. This resulted in talented women stayed at home and were confined to amateur activities.⁹⁴ Whitney Chadwick (1990) posits that women have consistently worked for artistic productions since the medieval era, but their

⁹⁴ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Feminist Aesthetics," May 7, 2004. *Stanford University*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-aesthetics/>.

practices were neglected as craftsmanship, not works of art. Chadwick examines the role of “woman” in art history and finds that female figures were often presented as *art objects* instead of the *artists*. Women scholars also study how the production of the female nude in the paintings is often presented as an attractive “form” under the male artist’s gaze or presented as an “object” as if women lack speaking agency (e.g., Nochlin 1971, Chadwick 1990, Chow 1993, Duncan 1995).

In modern art production, Carol Duncan discovers the masculine undertone in artistic creation; For instance, Abstract Expressionism is often associated with male labor and physical strength to create dynamic lines and colors on a large canvas. Duncan further explores: “The women of modern art, regardless of who their real-life models were, have a little identity other than their sexuality and availability, and, often, their low social status” (Duncan 1995, 111). Duncan studies female images in modern to contemporary art—including Modernism, Cubism, Futurism, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism—and finds that female forms showing in the artwork are often collaged or reduced to simply a visual form breaking into pieces. Duncan uses visual examples in modern art to support her viewpoints, including Picasso’s *Demoiselles d’Avignon* (1907) as grotesque and dangerous, de Kooning’s *Woman I* (1950-1952) as a demonic figure, powerful and intimidating; and Robert Heinecken’s *Invitation to Metamorphosis* (1975) cutting a woman’s face and body into pieces as bizarre, segmented forms. Women’s images have become teasing, seductive, and threatening (1995, 132-133).

Reviewing female imagery in Chinese-speaking regions, Rey Chow finds that traditional Chinese painting and literature tend to envision women as still-life (Chow 1993, 25). In a traditional Confucian patriarchal society, Chow discovers, a popular

concept of women is characterized by an idealized portrait. This ideal female image reinforces women staying in a silenced position as an object, and dangerously, such an idealistic image can attract violence upon the female body. Even today, feminism and women's studies are still marginalized in Chinese-speaking regions under the grand narratives of nationalism and Confucianism (Chow 1993, 43).

However, thanks to the international feminist movement during the 20th century, women have gained better access to higher education and achieved better career paths to assume a leading role. Corresponding to the feminist art movement, more women artists and curators participate in mainstream art exhibitions. Over the past five decades, female artists and curators have appeared at international art biennials. Reducing the longstanding biased condition takes time. Table 12 and Table 13 indicate that female curators are much fewer than their male counterparts. Though they are still the minority, the female curators gain authorship of contemporary art through selecting and displaying visual objects in an exhibition.

2. Conflicting Roles: The Curator's Public Duties versus Domestic Gendered Role

It took the art biennial world a long time to recognize female art professionals' curatorial leadership. Why are female curators often teamed together for one exhibition, while male curators are chosen as the sole curator taking charge of one art biennial? In answering these questions, this chapter discusses the curator's duties as a public tastemaker and knowledge producer, and discovers the potential challenges for women who pursue curatorship in the international art biennials.

A curator's primary duty is to bring the artwork to the public eye and facilitate a channel for networking artists and the global art scene. Many curators are also avid writers for art magazines and cultural media. Their writings and curatorial practices generate meanings for the art biennial, while the curatorial statement can be a guiding principle for designing and displaying artworks. A curator's tasks include complex communication with various institutions, communicating with a broader range of artists, acquiring artwork, fund-raising, and managing frequent cross-continental travel schedules (Meyer 2003). When appointing new curators for international exhibitions, the biennial committee looks for art professionals who have decades-long curatorial experience within national museums or international exhibitions, fund-raising skills, and preferably the curator has above college degrees: "They [the curators] must be able to communicate not only with artists but also with community leaders, business executives, and heads of state...the ability of art to touch and mobilize people and encourage debates about spirituality, creativity, identity, and the nation" (Brenson 1998, 16). In other words, curating an art biennial requires specific shared values that enable dialogue among the artists, curators, art patrons, art media, the audience, and other participants. Curators engage with this network and interdependence among participants. These shared values and curatorial innovations are the cultural capital built by Biennial participants, and their social networks ascribe artistic values within the art biennial scene.

Further, global capitalism transforms the art biennials into festive events for attracting international art patrons. The art biennials' curatorial task also becomes a freelanced job for the international curators who can work independently without museum institutional restrictions. As art historian Hans Belting pointed out, "The

responsible curators, mostly foreigners, guarantee or pretend to guarantee a high level of acceptance and attention for local artists” (2013, 25). Many emerging independent curators work by commission or projects; they often curate site-specific exhibitions with a set theme, budget, deadline, and the target audiences. As the competition among art biennials rises, these “uber-curators” have become more entrepreneurial-minded, as many art biennials adopt the international business model to expand their patronage globally (George 2015, 4). For this reason, the art biennial’s curatorial task is always on the go.

As each art biennial evolves to an international scale, the curator must go with a frequent international traveling schedule. Global capitalism contributes to the declining cost of air transportation and art exhibitions’ international cooperation. With faster and more frequent cross-continent interactions, the geographic distance among different biennials has shrunk. However, the fact often overlooked is that the curators’ regular travel schedule could be challenging for many female professionals because women still handle traditional gender role, social expectations on domestic duties as caregivers and homemakers. There is still gender bias in domestic chores, and women need to run most of the household errands and work-family conflict roles (e.g., Nochlin 1971, Chadwick 1990, Chow 1993, William Lee 2002). “In a Confucian patriarchal society, the traditional female gender roles are still heavily imposed on women, who are expected to take on unpaid domestic housework and childcare” (William Lee 2002, 245). William Lee’s research reveals that women in Chinese-speaking regions still handle the majority of domestic chores even though they have full-time jobs. The domestic, gendered duty can be a cause that prevents female curators from working for the international biennials that demand frequent travel.

3. Female Curators' Teamwork as Social Capital

Records show that the biennial institutions often assign more female than male curators to one curatorial team (UiU 2021, Biennial Foundation 2021). Table 12 indicates that the first time that female curators appeared in the art biennial was in 2005, when María de Corral and Rosa Martínez curated the Venice Biennale; a two-person female curatorial team for the longest-running art biennial in the world. María de Corral had more than two decades of curatorial experience before taking on the position, and art critic Rosa Martínez also had decades of curatorial experience in Europe, Japan, and Russia. These female curators were assigned to teamwork with other curators, but male curators in the previous Venice Biennales were often the sole curator for one exhibition. Does curatorial teamwork disregard each female curator's ability? Or, is teamwork a strategy for women art professionals to gather their social capital?

Soon after the 2005 Venice Biennale, teaming women curators for one biennial exhibition continued in the 2006 Bienal de São Paulo, the second-longest-running art biennial in the world. For the Bienal de São Paulo, the first female curators appeared but as a three-person curatorial team: Lisette Lagnado, Cristina Freire, and Rosa Martínez (Table 13). Among these curators, Rosa Martínez was invited back to the international art biennial circle after her curatorial task for the 2005 Venice Biennale, showing that art biennial leadership is indeed a small circle.

In 2012, six female curators were selected for one curatorial team of the Gwangju Biennale in South Korea. These women curators were from six different Asian countries: Wassan Al-Khudairi (Iraq), Sunjung Kim (South Korea), Mami Kataoka (Japan), Alia

Swastika (Indonesia), Carol Yinghua Lu (China), and Nancy Adajania (India) under the 2012 Gwangju Biennale's title "Roundtable." Each of them also chose to work on six independent but interrelated sub-themes: "Impact of Mobility on Space and Time," "Back to the Individual Experience," "Intimacy, Autonomy and Anonymity," "Transient Encounters," "Re-visiting History," and "Logging in and Out of Collectivity." According to the 2012 Gwangju Biennale webpage, the reason for recruiting six female curators for a show was to generate multicultural viewpoints through their teamwork.

This exhibition undoubtedly presented a novel narrative about global art and recovered female aesthetics from the conventional male gaze and male-centered regional geopolitical conflicts. However, the Gwangju Biennale was also questionable: if the curators had been male, would they have been teamed up to share one-sixth of an exhibition without entire curatorial leadership?

Although curatorial teamwork diminishes individual significance, team members still gain a social network in the art biennial circle. Historical examples show that artists have created numerous art movements and avant-garde aesthetics with teamwork and collective efforts. For instance, the Fluxus, Womanhouse, and various female artists' groups have made new communities since the 1960s. They initiated new ways to work together, new forms of meaning-production, and new methods for event-organizing that would later be considered curatorial innovation (Richter 2016). Sociologist Howard Becker emphasizes that artistic production, as same as all human activities, involves collaborative activities among many people: "Works of art are not the products of individual makers, 'artists' who possess a rare and special gift" (Becker 2008, 35). Becker's perspective highlights that artwork is often collective, and the artistic value is

socially constructed because recognizing the value of “art” has always been a social process.

In this sense, the art biennials’ curators are shaping the artistic domain of global art, and the 2012 Gwangju Biennale’s six female curators’ teamwork could be seen as a form of curatorial networking. These female curators’ endeavors break away from the predominantly male perspectives and collectively organize an international mega-exhibition. The 2012 Gwangju Biennale’s theme “Roundtable” hinted at the sense of cross-national collaboration and sisterhood. Therefore, one way to view the 2012 Gwangju Biennale is considering women curators’ collective energy as a group of talented artists’ collective efforts in an art movement; this six-female-curators’ collaboration effectively contributed to the visibility of their curatorial projects. Similar to the art movements that demand each individual’s contribution, and the collective work attracting artists to create together, these curators’ teamwork increase their volume and artistic records.

4. Interviews with the Taipei Biennial’s Taiwanese Female Curators

The following section focuses on the Taipei Biennial and uncovers the Taiwanese female curators’ dedications. Although in more than two decades’ Taipei Biennial history, only two Taiwanese women art professionals have taken the chief curatorial role: Amy Huei-hua Cheng and Mali Wu (in the alphabetic order of the curator’s last name). This section serves as a delayed credit to their life-long contribution to contemporary Taiwanese art, and to recognize their female authorship of global art knowledge production.

4.1 Amy Huei-hua Cheng: The 2004 Taipei Biennial

At a news conference on the opening night of the 2004 Taipei Biennial, Taiwanese curator Amy Huei-hua Cheng was absent. Surprising to most journalists and artists of the event, Cheng pulled her curatorial statement from the biennial catalog. Instead, Cheng published this text, “How Can We Face the Reality? The Declaration of Absence in the Taipei Biennial Opening,” on her blog.⁹⁵ With the Taipei Biennial’s curatorial duty, Cheng wanted to explore the Taipei Biennial’s importance in a global context and tried to faithfully present Taiwan’s contemporary art scene on an international stage. After months of hard work, Cheng chose not to present at the Biennial’s opening because her goal could not be fulfilled. She describes the Taipei Biennial’s Duo-Curators system as “similar to inviting an international superstar to perform with a local band,” but “without mutual respect and consensus, the Duo-Curators system might duplicate the hierarchical power structure of the global art world to the Taipei Biennial, and somehow relegates the local curator as a warm-up singer who has lost the opportunity to sing for herself” (Cheng 2004).

Cheng recalls her experience in our interview: “As an important international art exhibition staged in Taiwan, the Taipei Biennial should present a stronger cultural confidence.”⁹⁶ She does not deny the importance of inviting foreign curators to connect

⁹⁵ See Huei-hua Cheng, “How Can We Face the Reality? The Declaration of Absence in the Taipei Biennial Opening [*woumen ruhe miandui xianshih- wei chuxi taipei shuannianzhan kaimu de shuoming*]” in *Amy’s Mumble Bumble (blog)*. Oct. 26, 2004. <https://rb.gy/ev8d00>.

⁹⁶ The original interview with Huei-hua Cheng was via Zoom on July 2, 2020. A follow up clarifying the materials with Cheng was on April 27, 2021.

the Taipei Biennial with the global art biennial circle, but rejects the power hierarchy of the international art scene, for it weakens Taiwanese cultural subjectivity. She adds: “It is dangerous that the Taipei Biennial depended on the judgment of international curators to represent Taiwan’s art. This dependence damages local cultural identity and silences the authentic Taiwanese voice.”

Cheng’s curatorial vision stems from her long-term career writing for art journals. Before assuming the curatorial position, she worked for Taiwan’s art scene after graduating from the Fine Arts Department at National Taiwan Normal University. With her passion and understanding for Taiwanese contemporary art, Cheng wanted to work much closer with the artists than simply writing about them: “Curating an exhibition allows me to engage with artists in collective work. This hands-on experience is unique to me more than simply being a researcher and writer,” Cheng shares her idea: “though I enjoy writing art and analyze artists’ creative paths, ideas, and artworks, I also hope to have a physical space to show and share their works in an interesting visual context, not just describe it through texts.”⁹⁷

Cheng’s first curatorial project, *The Invisible City* (2003), presented contemporary Taiwanese artists’ work in Vancouver. She engaged her curatorial practices with her journalist’s experiences and interviewed Hank Bull, the director of Centre A, and Zheng Shengtian, the editor of *Yishu* art journal, to gain diverse perspectives about Taiwan’s art. Two months before the 2004 Taipei Biennial, Cheng organized the *Ruins and Civilization* exhibition in Taipei to present contemporary Taiwanese artists’ views on

⁹⁷ The interview was originally in Mandarin Chinese and then translated by this dissertation author. A follow up confirmation the texts with Cheng was in December 2021.

Taiwan's urban lifestyle and social issues. After the 2004 Taipei Biennial incident, Cheng sustained her mission to promote Taiwanese art on global stages through her curatorial practices. She worked for the TFAM's exhibition projects and curated for the Taiwan Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011. Fulfilling her long term independent curatorial practices with centering on the geo-political relations between Asia and the world, Cheng has been also invited to be the jury member for the 2017 Venice Biennale, and she is the only one in the jury that is from Asia.

About the geopolitics among international art biennials, Cheng further stated:

Each edition of the Taipei Biennial should have curatorial strategies in responding to the dynamic global art scene. After all, the Taipei Biennial has a unique geo-position in both east Asia and Southeast Asia.

In 2010, Cheng and Jeph Lo established *TheCube Project Space* in Taipei for contemporary Taiwanese and international artists with various projects: exhibitions, lectures, workshops, live shows, radio broadcasting, and cultural archives recorded during the nearly four decades' martial law era (1949–1987), which was also the most prolonged martial-law period in the world when it was lifted.

Cheng shared that *TheCube* is not only a curatorial platform for contemporary art and visual and audio cultures, as an independent space, also aims to research in-depth on the history and the artistic energy in post-martial law Taiwan; at the time Taiwanese emerging artistic and cultural productions began moving toward a freer and liberal public sphere, while embracing diverse local and international cultural elements. She describes her visions on *TheCube*:

My curatorial practice is not limited to visual art but also includes contemporary sound practices and cross-disciplinary artistic practices. Therefore, we chose Taipei's Gonguan area as the location for *TheCube*. Gonguan is a significant

place where Taiwan's underground music/sound scene and youth culture emerged. As you know, many of us grew up in this vibrant environment. That is why *TheCube* tries to capture and record Taiwanese youth energy in the post-martial law era until today. *TheCube* is a platform for artists and activists to network and to experiment with new ideas.

As an independent curator, I am free from institutional restrictions, and I cherish the opportunity of artistic freedom and independence outside of the museum institution. But the curatorial freedom stems from more responsibilities and self-disciplines. I have more works, such as fund-raising, frequent traveling, and countless hands-on tasks.

Having international curatorial experiences for years, Cheng observes the curatorship from within the Biennial institution: "There have been aesthetic paradigm-shifts in the global art scene during the past two decades. In reality, the art biennials around the globe have become more like festive events than just art exhibitions." She comments that the international art biennials have gradually become more homogeneous in line with a globalized cultural logic. Cheng argues: "The art biennials are affected by a pervasive global trend if not being consumed. Many international art biennials become more like multi-purpose "festive-like" events for city branding, governmental cultural promotions and by doing so, trying to attract more visitors and audiences."

4.2 Mali Wu: The 2018 Taipei Biennial

"I am not really a curator in conventional definitions," Mali Wu humbly states in our interview.⁹⁸ In fact, Mali Wu's life-long art career has awarded her the National Award for Arts, a prestigious recognition by Taiwan's National Cultural and Arts Foundation (NCAF).⁹⁹ News media has also touted her as the "godmother" of Taiwan's

⁹⁸ The interview with Mali Wu was via Zoom on December 11, 2020. A follow up clarification of the materials with Wu was on May 10, 2021.

socially engaged art.¹⁰⁰ With decades of international art exhibitions listed in her portfolio, Mali Wu is a pioneer of contemporary Taiwanese art, and her artworks have been exhibited in various international art biennials. She was the represented Taiwanese artist in the 1995 Venice Biennale with a gracefully installed artwork, *The Library*. As Taiwan Studies scholar Shu-mei Shih described Mali Wu's art in "Globalisation and the (in) significance of Taiwan," the shredded multicultural classic books quietly present and question Taiwanese unique yet fragmented cultural formation (Shih 2003, 149).

Mali Wu takes different roles as an artist, educator, curator, and activist dedicated to art and cultural projects. In these creative projects, she has strong interests in finding solutions for environmental issues, rural and urban space, and gender awareness and equality. After graduating from Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in 1985, Mali Wu returned to Taiwan amidst the dynamic social upheavals around 1990s when martial law ended. Her art practices have always engaged with the greater scope of cultural and social issues. "I often cooperated with social groups and activists to challenge the status quo," Wu recalls:

I used political symbols in my work and engaged with political subject matters, such as *Asia* (1989), *Love to the Highest Point* (1990), *Taiwan Complex* (1990), and *Love the National Movement* (1991), for instance. I wanted to engage with my audiences by interacting with their ideas on social and political issues at a time when Taiwan was experiencing critical social changes.

Invited by the 1998 Taipei Biennial, Mali Wu presented the *Tales of Formosa* project and built a fake lover's motel inside Taipei Fine Art Museum. Her thought-

⁹⁹ See National Cultural and Arts Foundation (NCAF), Taiwan, "National Award for Arts: Mali Wu," *National Cultural and Arts Foundation, Taiwan*. https://www.ncafroc.org.tw/artist_detail.html?id=39474.

¹⁰⁰ See Zheng Bo, "An Interview with Wu Mali." *FIELD*, issue 3, 2016. <http://field-journal.com/issue-3/an-interview-with-wu-mali>.

provoking project was not only corresponded to the Biennial's curatorial theme, *Site of Desire*, but also represented a protest against the gender-biased display in museum settings. Wu also printed business cards for this motel with the TFAM's address and phone number. She shares her ideas:

I built a motel in the museum as an institutional critique. It was disappointing to see many artworks were about objectified and sexualized female images to please male gaze, and the fact that there were much fewer female artists invited to the previous (1996) Taipei Biennial. Particularly, the goal of the 1996 Biennial attempted to represent Taiwan's identity and culture for international viewers.

Mali Wu's artwork incorporates community-building and female subjectivity. In *Xinzhuang Women's Story*, her video documented female factory workers' daily lives. Xinzhuang is an area in Taipei's suburb filled with factories and industrial waste. Mali Wu's documentation presented these sweatshop workers' contributions to a society's economic growth, though they are often being ignored. In other community-based art projects, Wu also collaborated with the Taipei Awakening Association, a Taiwanese women's rights organization. In her *Awake in Your Skin* project (2000-2004), Wu designed a reading list of female-empowered books for fabric workshops in the association. She remembers:

I noticed that event has gone beyond simply housewives' gathering to work on fabrics, they began discussing the feminist-inspired readings, and the gathering has become a female supportive network. As an organizer of the reading event, I am glad to see my projects creating positive impacts beyond making art together. In my socially engaging projects, I want to show female subjectivity. Women have always been the backbone instead of the backdrop of Taiwan's societal and economic development.

Wu expands the role of a visual artist with her experiments that cross the boundaries among arts, performances, and social movements. Her art projects also inspire

new ways of community building. Another example is *Chiayi Tropic of Cancer Environmental Art* (2005-2007), an artist-in-residence project in which Wu invited artists to live and work with several local communities around Chiayi county in Taiwan. In her environmental art project, *By the River, on the River, of the River* (2006), Wu worked with community college students tracing the four rivers surrounding Taipei. In these creative projects, Wu often incorporates visual art installations and performances calling for audiences' environmental awareness and engagement.

Before receiving the TFAM's appointment as the 2018 Taipei Biennial curator, Wu was familiar with the art biennial scene: she exhibited at the Venice Biennial in 1995 and 1997, at the Taipei Biennial in 1998 and 2008, and numerous international art biennials.¹⁰¹ Corresponding to her long-term socially engaged art practices, the 2018 Taipei Biennial emphasized multi-disciplinary collaboration. Wu shares in our interview:

My art projects have always been cross-disciplinary, and I consider my art practice is a form of cultural activity. In the 2018 Taipei Biennial, I worked with co-curator Francesco Manacorda, and we developed a curatorial strategy to push the Biennial's boundaries beyond visual art and the TFAM's walls. Under the theme *Post-Nature: A Museum as an Ecosystem*, we encouraged the artists to install their works in multiple venues outside the museum.

This curatorial process worked well and made the Biennial exhibition more accessible to the public. To connect with the exhibition and the museum's surrounding nature, the Biennial also invited environmental groups to design public events involving artwork and nature. Wu explains her curatorial ideas:

Many museum visitors often ignore the Keelung River running by the museum and the Yuanshan Mountain nearby, so we created a new form of an exhibition for the audiences to think about the environment. The Soundscape Association of Taiwan guided audiences to the mountain overlooking the river and recorded

¹⁰¹ Wu Mali, "Artist's Page," *IT Park Gallery & Photo Studio*, <http://www.itpark.com.tw/artist/index/13>.

the natural sound around Yuanshan Mountain. In the museum, this sound clip was played by the painting *Yuanshan Mountain* by the respectful Taiwanese artist Kuo Hsueh-Hu (1908-2012).

Another non-profit organization, the Taiwan Thousand Miles Trail Association, led audiences to hike from the Jiantan Mountain nearby the museum to more distant Jingmei Mountain, Zhongpu Mountain, and Fuzhou Mountain. Hikers got to experience Taipei's suburban environment while they enjoyed the beauty hidden in the trail. To me, the Taiwan Thousand Miles Trail Association's project is a form of land art.

The 2018 Taipei Biennial also invited Taiwanese indigenous land-rights activists to “occupy” the museum and featured social workers' projects engaging Taiwan's history and natural environment. Wu shares her interdisciplinary curatorial ideas: “Every environmental problem is a cultural problem. This Biennial exhibition is more than a static display of artworks, but a laboratory for artists collaborative with environmentalists, community workers, and historians to build a ‘living exhibition.’” With her socially engaged ideas and artists' creativity, the 2018 Taipei Biennial challenged the concept of what an art exhibition should be. Mali Wu shares her vision: “many artists in this exhibition used sound and smell besides visual display; they encouraged viewers to touch certain artworks.” She invited Southeast Asian artists to present artworks regarding their countries' diverse colonized histories corresponding to Taiwan's historical past. Wu shares her thoughts:

To Taiwanese audiences, it is crucial to recognize the connections between Taiwanese and Southeast Asian multi-colonized histories. I tried to rearrange a mental map that Taiwan is not simply adjacent to China, but also has closer historical relations with other Asian Pacific regions.

For female curators' teamwork and leadership in the art biennials, Wu shares her insights: “In Taiwan's museums and art institutions, there have been many women art professionals. It is exciting to see more female curators in the art exhibitions.” But Wu

takes a step further; her art and curatorial practices inspire a new form of community building. Her dedication to the contemporary Taiwanese art scene has shown a greater vision of women's crucial position in Taiwan's social development and cultural history.

CONCLUSION:

New Geopolitics in the Digitized Art Biennial World?

“Today the most dangerous place on earth is arguably the Taiwan Strait, where a war between the United States and China could erupt out of miscalculation, or accident.”

- Nancy B. Tucker, *Dangerous Strait: The U.S.-Taiwan-China Crisis*

Nancy B. Tucker alerts a potential warfare more intensifying than the Russia-Ukraine Invasion, a devastating conflict occurring at the moment during this dissertation’s completion. The Taiwan Strait has again attracted media attention on the continual geopolitical struggles; *The Economist* covered Taiwan in May 2021 issue “The most dangerous place on Earth.” In the cross-Strait tensions, the Taipei Biennial and the Shanghai Biennale are ongoing events with complex geopolitical meanings and cultural values that require consistent observation. This dissertation serves as a starting point for studying the geopolitics of the Sinophone art biennials and proposes further research inquiries.

During my research, the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic occurred, and many art biennials were forced to cancel or postponed (see Table 9). UNESCO’s statistics show that nearly 90 percent of the world’s museums have temporarily closed during the pandemic (UNESCO 2020). Under the quarantined restriction during the global pandemic, many artists and curators had to use the internet to keep the art world running. Table 10 and Table 11 show that both the Taipei Biennial 2020 and the Shanghai Biennale 2020 still opened to the public in November 2020 with strict social distancing

measures and integrated online exposure to sustain and increase global viewership. The themes of these two Biennials suggest different curatorial strategies in adapting to the pandemic reality to gain viewership. The Taipei Biennial's *You and I Don't Live on the Same Planet* exhibition and discussion forums hinted at diplomatic maneuver via online space confronting Taiwan's precarious sovereignty. At the same time, the Shanghai Biennale's *Bodies of Water* offered a flexible and experimental practice with a prolonged event timeline targeting more audiences.

Digital technology and World Wide Web offer a convenient solution to keep the art biennial going; in particular, the Taipei Biennial's mission is to enhance Taiwan's international visibility. Digital media, therefore, becomes the Biennial's global outreach tool for artistic and cultural value to circulate among netizens: the global reception of the Taipei Biennial appears in the news coverage and international journals, while the emerging Chinese social media and China's digital Great Firewall further complicate the cultural industries' digital campaign across the globe.¹⁰² As the digital reproduction of the Taipei Biennial and Shanghai Biennale information spread online, both events increased exhibition value with more viewers. However, the health crisis squeezes social interaction into a two-dimensional screen (a small box) while viewers shelter at home (a larger box), seemingly contradicting an art biennial's cosmopolitan vibe. The experiences of exhibition-goers are thus framed in a box, a digital screen that lacks a liminal sanctuary space as in a museum (Duncan 1995, 16).

¹⁰² Table 11 shows that the media coverage of the Taipei Biennial, including reportage from *Art Asia Pacific*, *Asia Week*, *Art Forum*, *Art Review*, *Flash Art*, *Frieze*, *ART news*, *New York Times*, *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, to name a few. The art professional websites focusing on international art biennial exhibitions include *artnet*, *universe-in-universe*, *Biennial Foundation*, *e-flux*, *Artsy*, *artmap*, *biennialwatch*, *artlinkart*, *artradarjournal*, *yishu-online*.

The art biennial's online presentation and digital media outreach further blur the thin line between an art exhibition and mass culture. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin examines the aura – the illuminated element in the artwork – that has withered in the process of reproduction (Benjamin [1936] 2009). According to Benjamin, an artwork has its cult value and exhibition value. In photography, for example, exhibition value replaces cult value because of mass reproduction. The photocopies of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* can increase to the extent that the quantity transforms the quality, which is different from the cult value of the singular, original painting. Though the aura of art has declined in the age of mechanical reproduction, Benjamin argues that reproduction also contributes to its exhibition value: "The instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice—politics" (Benjamin [1935] 2009). Modern reproduction technology liberates artwork from its dependence on religious meanings because the artwork's singularity is no longer critical, and the mass copying of artwork substitutes art's cult value with exhibition value.

The art biennial's digitally reproduced images and cultural values consistently circulate online long after the exhibition's closing reception, unlike exhibitions in physical space that last for only a specific time. Applying Arjun Appadurai's globalization theory – the five globalized "scapes:" ethnoscaples, technoscaples, finanscaples, mediascaples, and ideoscaples – these conceptual landscapes are irregular, often overlapping, intersections and disjunctures in the transnational art biennial world. During the global pandemic, the unbalanced new normal began with the ethnoscaples'

mobility slowing down or even freezing, while all other scapes rapidly reconfigure on the World Wide Web. The internet and digital technology may have changed how we feel about geographic distance. Within a virtual environment, the world seems to be shrinking and flattened on the internet; therefore, the art biennial's geographic location makes less difference.

Digital media and mediation might have transformed the geopolitical meanings of the art biennial. The Biennials have been applying digital media to expand their exhibition value even before the COVID-19 pandemic; The online world is a realm of visual spectacle, and biennial exhibitions now compete more aggressively for viewers' attention among extensive digital information. Global netizens have been overwhelmed by image flows through cyberspace that break the boundary between fine art and everyday life. Looking through Benjamin's lens, the unlimited digitally reproduced art images seemingly offer a democratic aesthetic experience for more viewers globally. But the art biennial's aura might be withered as the digitally reproduced Biennial imagery increases, and the broadening viewership might have a consequence that deteriorates the art biennial's prominence, the Olympics of the art world. Furthermore, the Biennials' digital campaigns need to compete with other cultural industries and visually compelling e-commerce web pages – from fashion and design to digital tycoons' cross-national empires, such as Amazon or Alibaba.

As a result, the art biennials' competition has extended beyond the art world and is akin to the business campaign. The biennial exhibition needs new message-delivery strategies and a skillful technology team to stand out from numerous compelling virtual presentations. Critically, our challenge in viewing the digital representation of an art

exhibition might be more than the lack of physical experience, but how the big data underneath (and collected by the cross-national Big Tech industries) is constantly calculating our minds, desires, artistic perception, and aesthetic valorization.

Above all, the unexpected global health crisis has urged us to rethink the art biennial's geopolitical meaning of new online normal in the digital world. The geopolitics of the art biennials shifted to the cyber platform, be that multinational digital media or state-owned news media. Each Biennial's digital media preference – relying upon which cross-national big techs' application – might rewrite the geopolitical meanings of the art biennials in the post-pandemic future. On the World Wide Web, nation-state boundaries seem to be diminished, but the growing China-based digital media further complicates the virtual geopolitical landscape. China has a long history of intervening in Taiwan's diplomatic space, including virtual space. Today, China's state-promoted digital media and the Great Firewall's impacts on the geopolitics of Sinophone cultural production have continual effects. Will Taiwan's innovative technology and democratic cultural soft power break through its geopolitical dilemma? Moreover, digital technology should be gender neutral. Will there be more female curators in future art Biennials online? My research concludes with some persistent questions because female curatorship in the field of art biennial and Taiwan's precarious sovereignty deserves continual scholarly attention.

APPENDIX

1. Tables

Table 1

The First Two Art Biennials in the World

Biennales	Founded time	Country
Venice Biennale	1895	Italy
Bienal de São Paulo	1951	Brazil

Resource: The Venice Biennale official website and the Bienal de São Paulo official website.

Table 2

The First Two Art Biennials in Chinese-speaking Regions

Biennials	Founded Year	International edition	City	Political region
Taipei Biennial	1992	1998	Taipei	Taiwan
Shanghai Biennale	1996	2000	Shanghai	China

Resource: The Taipei Biennial official website, the Shanghai Biennale official website, and the Universes in Universe website.

Table 3

The Art Biennials in Chinese-speaking Regions

Biennials	Founded Year	City	Region
Taipei Biennial	1992	Taipei	Taiwan
Shanghai Biennale	1996	Shanghai	China
Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale	1998	Shenzhen	China
Chengdu Biennale	2001	Chengdu (Sichuan province)	China
Guangzhou Triennial	2002	Guangzhou	China
Beijing International Art Biennale	2003	Beijing	China
Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture	2005	Hong Kong and Shenzhen	China
Singapore Biennale	2006	Singapore	Singapore
Animamix Biennial	2007	Taipei, Shanghai, Beijing, Gwangzhou	China and Taiwan
Asian Art Biennial	2007	Taichung	Taiwan
Taiwan Biennial	2008	Taichung	Taiwan
Kuandu Biennale	2008	Taipei	Taiwan
Western China International Art Biennale	2010	Beijing	China
CAFAM Biennale	2011	Beijing	China

Yinchuan Biennale	2015	Yinchuan	China
Anren Biennale	2017	Chengdu	China

Resource: The Biennial Foundation official website and the Universes in Universe website.

Table 4

The Curators and Themes of the Taipei Biennial

Year	Theme	Curators
1992-1996	The Taipei Biennial of Contemporary Art 台北當代藝術雙年展	Taipei Fine Arts Museum
1998	Site of Desire 慾望場域	Nanjo Fumio (Japan)
2000	The Sky is the Limit 無法無天	Jerome Sans (France), Manray Hsu
2002	Great Theatre of the World 世界劇場	Bartomeu Mari (Spain), Chia Chi Jason Wang
2004	Do You Believe in Reality? 在乎現實嗎?	Barbara Vanderlinden (Belgium), Amy Huei-hua Cheng
2006	Dirty Yoga (限制級)瑜珈	Dan Cameron (US), Jun-jieh Wang
2008	Untitled 無題	Manray Hsu, Vasif Kortun (Turkey)
2010	Untitled 無題	Hongjohn Lin, Tirdad Zolghadr (US)
2012	Modern Monsters/ Death and Life of Fiction 現代怪獸/想像的死而復生	Anselm Franke (Germany)
2014	The Great Acceleration 劇烈加速度	Nicolas Bourriaud (France)
2016	Gestures and archives of the present, genealogies 當下檔案·未來系譜	Corinne Diserens (France)
2018	Post-Nature—A Museum as an Ecosystem 後自然：美術館作為一個生態系統	Mali Wu, Francesco Manacorda (Italy)
2020	You and I don't live on the same planet 你我不住在同一星球上	Bruno Latour (France), Martin Guinard-Terrin (France)

Resource: The Taipei Biennial official website, the Universes in Universe website.

Table 5

The Curators and Themes of Shanghai Biennale

Year	Theme	Chief Curator(s)
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1996	Open Space 开放的空间	Wang Lin
1998	Inheritance and Expansion 融合与拓展	Shanghai Art Museum and Annie Wong Art Foundation
2000	Spirit of Shanghai 海上·上海	Hou Hanru (China/France), Toshio Shimizu(Japan), Li Xu, Zhang Qing
2002	Urban Creation 都市营造	Fan Di'an, Alanna Heiss (US), Wu Jiang, Li Xu, Klaus Biesenbach (Germany), Yuko Hasegawa (Japan)
2004	Techniques of the Visible 影像生存	Xu Jiang, Zheng Shengtian (Canada), Sebastián López (Argentina/ Amsterdam), Zhang Qing
2006	Hyper Design 超设计	Zhang Qing, Huang Du, Gianfranco Maraniello (Italy), Shu-Min Lin (US), Wonil Rhee (South Korea), Jonathan Watkins (UK), Xiao Xiaolan
2008	Translocalmotion 快城快客	Zhang Qing, Julian Heynen (Germany), Henk Slager (Netherlands)
2010	Rehearsal 巡回排演	Fan Di'An, Li Lei, Gao Shiming
2012	Reactivation 重新发电	Qiu Zhijie
2014	Urban=Work & Shop 社会工厂	Anselm Franke (Germany)
2016	Why Not Ask Again 何不再问	Raqs Media Collective (India)
2018	Progress 禹步	Cuauhtémoc Medina (Mexico), María Belén Sáez de Ibarra (Colombia), Yukie Kamiya (Japan), Wang Weiwei
2020	Bodies of Water 水体	Andres Jaque (Spain)

Resource: The Shanghai Biennial official website, the Universes in Universe website.

Table 6

The Nationalities/Regions of International Curators in the Taipei Biennial (1992-2020)

Region	Nationality	Number	Name(s)
Asia	Japan	1	Nanjo Fumio
Middle East	Turkey	1	Vasif Kortun
Europe	France	5	Jerome Sans, Nicolas Bourriaud, Corinne Diserens, Bruno Latour, Martin Guinard-Terrin
Europe	Spain	1	Bartomeu Mari
Europe	Belgium	1	Barbara Vanderlinden

Europe	Germany	1	Anselm Franke
Europe	Italy	1	Francesco Manacorda
North America	US	2	Dan Cameron, Tirdad Zolghadr

Resource: The Taipei Biennial official website.

Table 7

The Nationalities/Regions of International Curators in the Shanghai Biennale (1996-2020)

Region	Nationality	Number	Name(s)
Asia	India	1	Raqs Media Collective
Asia	Japan	3	Toshio Shimizu, Yuko Hasegawa, Yukie Kamiya
Asia	South Korea	1	Wonil Rhee
Europe	Amsterdam	1	Sebastián López
Europe	France	1	Hou Hanru (China/France)
Europe	Germany	3	Klaus Biesenbach, Julian Heynen, Anselm Franke
Europe	Italy	1	Gianfranco Maraniello
Europe	Netherlands	1	Henk Slager
Europe	Spain	1	Andres Jaque
Europe	UK	1	Jonathan Watkins
North America	Canada	1	Zheng Shengtian
North America	Mexico	1	Cuauhtémoc Medina
North America	US	2	Alanna Heiss, Shu-Min Lin
South America	Argentina	1	Sebastián López
South America	Colombia	1	María Belén Sáez de Ibarra

Resource: The Shanghai Biennial official website, the Universes in Universe website.

Table 8

Self-organized Art Groups in China since 1977-1986

Area \ Year	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	Total
Anhui					1	1					2
Beijing		1	4	8	1	1	4		10	16	45
Fujian							1		1	6	8
Gansu								1			1
Guangdong							1		1	4	6
Hebei										1	1
Heilongjian							1				1

Table 9**Major Art Biennials Delayed due to COVID-19 Pandemic**

Name	Location	Original dates	New dates
Berlin Biennale	Berlin, Germany	June 13 -Sep.13, 2020	Sep. 5 – Nov. 1, 2020
Bienal de São Paulo	Sao Paulo, Brazil	September 5–December 6, 2020	Sep. 4–Dec. 5, 2021
Biennale de Lyon	Lyon, France	September 2021–January 2022	Fall 2022
Gwangju Biennale	Gwangju, South Korea	September 4–November 29, 2020	Feb. 26–May 9, 2021
Liverpool Biennial	Liverpool, England	July 11–October 25, 2020	March 20–June 6, 2021
Manifesta	Marseille, France	June 7–November 1, 2020	August 28–October 29, 2020
Sharjah Biennial	Sharjah, United Arab Emirates	Opens March 2021	Opens March 2022
Venice Biennale	Venice, Italy	Spring 2021	April 23–Nov. 27, 2022
Whitney Biennial	New York, USA	Spring 2021	April–August 2022

Resource: Biennial Foundation website.

Table 10**The Taipei Biennial 2020 and the Shanghai Biennale 2020**

Biennial	The Taipei Biennial 2020	The Shanghai Biennale 2020
Title	You and I Don't Live on the Same Planet	Bodies of Water
Chief Curator(s)	Chief curator: Bruno Latour, Martin Guinard	Chief curator: Andrés Jaque
Exhibition date	21 November 2020 - 13 March 2021	10 November 2020- 18 July 2021

Table 11**The Digital Campaign of the Taipei Biennial and the Shanghai Biennale**

	The Taipei Biennial 2020	The Shanghai Biennale 2020	Note
Baidu Tieba	V	V	Baidu Tieba is a widely used communication platform available in Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese.
Bilibili	V	V	Bilibili is a Chinese developed video-hosting site.

Douban	No post (before the closing reception)	V	Douban is a Chinese social platform that allows registered users to record information and create content related to films, books, music, recent events and urban activities in China.
Douyin	No post (before the closing reception)	V	Douyin is Chinese version of TikTok, also owned by Tencent.
Facebook	V	Not updated (after Dec. 2016)	The last uploaded Shanghai Biennale information was in December 2016.
Instagram	V	V	
LINE	V	No post (before the closing reception)	Developed in South Korea, LINE is a social app for messaging that is widely used in Taiwan.
Little Red Book	No post (before the closing reception)	V	Little Red Book (or <i>Xiaohongshu</i> in Chinese) is a Chinese social media and e-commerce platform focusing on the arts, fashion, luxury goods and consumption.
Ocula	V	V	Ocula is an online magazine focusing on contemporary art exhibition and art-sale advice.
Pinterest	V	V	
Sina Weibo	V	V	Sina Weibo is a Chinese microblogging site on which users can post limited words with images.
Twitter	V	V	
Tencent QQ	No post (before the closing reception)	V	Tencent QQ is an instant-messaging software service and web portal developed by Tencent, the big tech based in China.
Tencent Video	No post (before the closing reception)	V	Tencent Video is a video streaming website also owned by Tencent.
Toutiao	V	V	Toutiao is a Chinese news platform developed by Beijing-based ByteDance.
WeChat	V	V	WeChat is the most used social app in China also owned by Tencent.
Youku	V	V	Youku is a video hosting service based in Beijing.
YouTube	V	V	
Zhihu	V	V	Zhihu is a Chinese question-and-answer website for the netizens to post questions, answers and edits.

Other Media	<p><i>The Biennial Foundation, Universes in Universe, Art Forum, Art Review, Hyperallergic, CoBo Social, Art Thou (UK), Ocula, Photography-now, ArtAsiaPacific, the Philosophy and Technology, National Chengchi University (Taiwan), Shared-Campus, China's Swiss cultural council, Ran Dian.</i> Participating artist's gallery's websites, personal blogs and vlogs, etc.</p>	<p><i>The Biennial Foundation, Universes in Universe, Art Forum, Art Review, Arch Daily, ArtRabbit, Per quel che ne so io, The EastEast, Shanghai Daily News, CIMAM, designboom, News Break, Contemporary And,</i> Participating artist's gallery's websites, personal blogs and vlogs, etc.</p>	<p>The Venice Biennale's host organization changed its name to the Biennale Foundation in 2009. The official website of the Biennale Foundation also updates with comprehensive information about other international art biennials.</p>
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Resource: Google search and Baidu search, last accessed Feb. 2, 2021.

Table 11-1

Derived from Table 11. Table 11-1 is the Digital Campaign of the Taipei Biennial and the Shanghai Biennale (social media apps)

	The Taipei Biennial 2020	The Shanghai Biennale 2020	Social Media Founded Country
Baidu Tieba 	V	V	
Bilibili 	V	V	
Douban 		V	
Douyin 		V	
Facebook 	V		
Instagram 	V	V	
LINE 	V		
Little Red Book 		V	
Pinterest 	V	V	
Sina Weibo 	V	V	
Twitter 	V	V	
Tencent QQ 		V	
Tencent Video 		V	
Toutiao 	V	V	
WeChat 	V	V	
Youku 	V	V	
YouTube 	V	V	
Zhihu 	V	V	

Table 11-2

Derived from Table 11. Table 11-2 is The Digital Campaign of the Taipei Biennial and the Shanghai Biennale (international online art magazine)

	The Taipei Biennial 2020	The Shanghai Biennale 2020	E-zine Founded Country
The Biennial Foundation	V	V	Netherlands (founded), US (expanded)
Universes in Universe	V	V	Germany
Art Forum	V	V	US
Art Review	V	V	UK
Ocula	V	V	Australia and New Zealand

Resource: The Taipei Biennial and the Shanghai Biennale official websites, Google search and Baidu search. Last accessed Feb. 2, 2021.

Table 12

The Female Curators in the First Two Longest-running Biennials

Biennales	Founded time	Country	Female curators
Venice Biennale	1895	Italy	María de Corral and Rosa Martínez (2005)
			Bice Curiger(2011)
			Christine Macel (2017)
			Cecilia Alemani (2022)
Bienal de São Paulo	1951	Brazil	Chief curator: Lisette Lagnado, Co-curators: Cristina Freire, Rosa Martínez (2006)
			Corinne Diserens (2016)

Resource: The Venice Biennale official website, the Bienal de São Paulo official website, and the Biennial Foundation official website.

Table 13

The Female Curators in the First Two Longest-Running Art Biennials (in the World and in Asia)

Biennales	Country	Female curators
Venice Biennale	Italy	María de Corral and Rosa Martínez (2005)

		Bice Curiger (2011)
		Christine Macel (2017)
Bienal de São Paulo	Brazil	Chief curator: Lisette Lagnado,
		Co-curators: Cristina Freire, Rosa Martínez (2006)
		Co-curator: Yuko Hasekawa (2010)
		Isabela Villanueva (2012)
		Co-curators: Galit Eilat, Nuria Enguita Mayo (2014)
		Co-curators: Sofia Olascoaga, Júlia Rebouças (2016)
Taipei Biennial	Taiwan	Amy Huei-Hua Cheng, Barbara Vanderlinden (2004)
		Corinne Diserens (2016)
		Mali Wu, Francesco Manacorda (2018)
Gwangju Biennale	Korea	Kim Hong-hee (2006)
		6 female curators: Wassan Al-Khudairi, Sunjung Kim, Mami Kataoka, Alia Swastika, Carol Yinghua Lu and Nancy Adajania (2012)
		Maria Lind (2016)
		Clara Kim, Gridthiya Gaweewong, Yeon Shim Chung, Yeewan Koon, David Teh, Man Seok Kim, Sung woo Kim, Chong-Ok Paek, B.G. Muhn (2018)

** Green-colored names are male curators in the curatorial team.

Table 14

The Art Biennials Worldwide (in alphabetic order) updated 2022

Art Biennial	Country
Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art	Australia
AFiRIperFOMA Biennial	Nigeria
Aichi Triennale	Japan
Americas Biennial	USA
Andorra Land Art	Andorra
ANOZERO – Coimbra Biennial of Contemporary Art	Portugal
Anren Biennale	China
Antarctic Biennale	Antarctica

Anyang Public Art Project	South Korea
ARoS Triennial	Denmark
ARS	Finland
Art Encounters	Romania
Art Wuzhen	China
Arts: Le Havre	France
Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art	Australia
Asia Triennial Manchester	UK
Asian Art Biennale	Bangladesh
Asian Art Biennial	Taiwan
Ateliers de Rennes	France
Athens Biennale	Greece
Atlanta Biennial	USA
Auckland Triennial	New Zealand
Bahia Biennale	Brazil
Ballarat International Foto Biennale	Australia
Baltic Triennial of International Art	Lithuania
Bamako Encounters, Biennale of African Photography	Mali
Bangkok Art Biennale	Thailand
Bangkok Biennial	Thailand
Beaufort Triennial	Belgium
Beijing International Art Biennale	China
Benin Regard Biennale	Benin
Bergen Assembly	Norway
Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art	Germany
Bermuda Biennial	Bermuda
Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture	China
Bienal Centroamericana	Costa Rica
BIENALSUR	Argentina
Biennale d'Art Contemporain Autochtone	Canada
Biennale de l'Image en Mouvement	Switzerland
Biennale Gherdëina	Italy
Biennale Matter of Art	Czech Republic
Biennale Warszawa	Poland
Biennial of Young Artists from Europe and the Mediterranean	BJCEM
Blickachsen Sculpture Biennale	Germany

Bodø Biennale	Norway
Bonavista Biennale	Canada
Borås International Sculpture Biennale	Sweden
Brighton Photo Biennial	UK
Bristol Biennial	UK
Bruges Triennial	Belgium
Bucharest Biennale	Romania
Busan Biennale	South Korea
CAFAM Biennale	China
CAFKA – Contemporary Art Forum Kitchener and Area	Canada
Cairo Biennale	Egypt
California-Pacific Triennial	USA
Canakkale Biennial	Turkey
Carnegie International	USA
Carrara International Sculpture Biennale	Italy
Cartagena de Indias Biennial	Colombia
Casablanca Biennale / Biennale Internationale de Casablanca	Morocco
Central American Isthmus Biennial	BAVIC
Cerveira Bienal	Portugal
Changwon Sculpture Biennale	South Korea
Chengdu Biennale	China
Chicago Architecture Biennial	USA
Colombo Art Biennale	Sri Lanka
Contour Biennale	Belgium
Coventry Biennial	UK
Cuenca Biennial / Bienal de Cuenca	Ecuador
Curitiba Biennial / Bienal de Curitiba	Brazil
D-0 ARK Biennial	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Dak' Art: African Contemporary Art Biennale	Senegal
Dallas Biennial	USA
DeCordova New England Biennial	USA
Desert X	USA
Desert X AlUla	Saudi Arabia
Dhaka Live Art Biennale	Bangladesh
Documenta	Germany
Dojima River Biennale	Japan

Dublin Contemporary	Ireland
East Africa Art Biennale	East Africa
Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial	Japan
Emergency Biennale	Chechnya
End of the World Biennial	Argentina
EVA International	Ireland
Fellbach Triennial	Germany
Florence Biennale	Italy
Folkestone Triennial	UK
FotoFest	USA
Fremantle Biennale	Australia
Frestas: Art Triennial	Brazil
FRONT International	USA
Frontiers Biennial	Mexico
Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale	Japan
Garage Triennial	Russia
Ghetto Biennale	Russia
GIBCA – Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art	Sweden
Glasgow International	Scotland
Greater New York	USA
Guangzhou Triennial	China
Gwangju Biennale	South Korea
Harlem Biennale	USA
Havana Biennial	Cuba
Hawai'i Triennial	USA
Helsinki Biennial	Finland
Helsinki Photography Biennial	Finland
Henie Onstad Triennial	Norway
IDEAS CITY Festival	USA
Incheon Women Artists' Biennale	South Korea
Innsbruck International – Biennial of the Arts	Austria
International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam	Netherlands
International Print Biennale	UK
Islamabad Biennale	Pakistan
Istanbul Biennial	Turkey
Jakarta Biennale	Indonesia
Jamaica Biennial	Jamaica
Jeju Biennale	South Korea
Jerusalem Biennale	Israel
Jogja Biennale	Indonesia
Kampala Art Biennale	Uganda
Karachi Biennale	Pakistan
Kathmandu Triennale	Nepal

Kaunas Biennial	Lithuania
Kenpoku Art	Japan
KLA ART	Uganda
KOBE Biennale	Japan
Kochi-Muziris Biennale	India
KölnSkulptur	Germany
Kuala Lumpur Biennale	Malaysia
Kuandu Biennale	Taiwan
Kyiv Biennale	Ukraine
Lagos Biennial	Nigeria
Lahore Biennale	Pakistan
Land Art Mongolia / LAM 360° (Mongolia)	Mongolia
Larnaca Biennale	Cyprus
Les Ateliers de Rennes	France
Lisbon Architecture Triennale	Portugal
Liverpool Biennial	UK
Ljubljana Biennial of Design / BIO	Slovenia
Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts	Slovenia
Lofoten International Art Festival LIAF	Norway
Luanda Triennale	Angola
Lubumbashi Biennale	Congo
Luleå Biennial	Sweden
Lyon Biennale of Contemporary Art	France
Made in L.A.	USA
Manif d'art – The Quebec City Biennial	Canada
Manifesta Europe	Switzerland
Mardin Biennial	Turkey
Marrakech Biennale	Morocco
MDE Medellin Internation Art Encounter	Colombia
Mediations Biennale	Poland
Meeting Points	Lebanon
Mercosul Biennial	Brazil
Milan Triennial / La Triennale di Milano	Italy
MKH Biennale	Germany
MOMENTA Biennale de l'image	Canada
Momentum	Norway
Mongolia 360° Land Art Biennial	Mongolia
Montevideo Bienal	Uruguay

Montréal Biennale	Canada
Moscow Biennale	Russia
Moscow International Biennale for Young Art	Russia
Mural and Public Art Biennial	Colombia
N’GOLÁ Biennial of Arts and Culture	Sao Tomé and Príncipe
New Museum Triennial	USA
NGV Triennial	Australia
Nicaragua Biennial	Nicaragua
Northern Alps Art Festival	Japan
Nya Småland	Sweden
Oberschwaben Triennale	Germany
October Salon	Serbia
Odessa Biennale	Ukraine
OFF Biennale Cairo	Egypt
OFF-Biennale	Hungary
Okayama Art Summit	Japan
Oku-Noto Triennale	Japan
Online Biennale	USA
OpenART	Sweden
Oran Biennale	Algeria
Oslo Architecture Triennale	Norway
osloBIENNALEN / Oslo Pilot	Norway
Paris Biennale	France
People’s Biennial	USA
Performa	USA
Periferic Romania	Romania
Pittsburgh Biennial	USA
Pontevedra Art Biennial	Spain
Porto Design Biennale	Portugal
Prague Biennale	Czech Republic
Prospect New Orleans	USA
Public Art Melbourne Lab	Australia
Public Art Munich	Germany
Pune Biennale	India
Qalandiya International	Palestine
Rauma Biennale Balticum	Finland
Reborn Art Festival	Japan
RIBOCA – Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art	Latvia
Riwaq Biennale	Palestine
Rome Quadriennale	Italy
Ruhrtriennale	Germany
Saigon Open City	Vietnam

San Juan Poly/Graphic Triennial	Puerto Rico
Bienal de São Paulo	Brazil
Sao Tome e Príncipe Biennial	Sao Tome
Sapporo International Art Festival	Japan
SCAPE Public Art	New Zealand
Screen City Biennial	Norway
Sculpture Quadrennial Riga	Latvia
Seoul Mediacity Biennale – SeMa	South Korea
Sequences	Iceland
Sesc_Videobrasil	Brazil
Setouchi Triennale	Japan
Shanghai Biennale	China
Sharjah Biennial	United Arab Emirates
Shenzhen Biennale	China
Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale China	China
SIART	Bolivia
Singapore Biennale	Singapore
Sinopale	Turkey
Site Santa Fe International Biennial	USA
Skulptur Projekte Münster	Germany
Socle du Monde Biennale	Denmark
Sonsbeek	Netherlands
steirischer herbst	Austria
Stellenbosch Triennale	South Africa
Strasbourg Biennale	France
SUD, Salon Urbain de Douala	Cameroon
SURVIVAL	Poland
Survival Kit	Latvia
Suzhou Documents	China
Sydney Biennale / Biennale of Sydney	Australia
Taipei Biennial	Taiwan
Taiwan Biennial	Taiwan
Tallinn Photomonth	Estonia
Tallinn Print Triennial	Estonia
TarraWarra Biennial	Australia
Tate Triennial	UK
Tatton Park Biennial	UK
Tbilisi Triennial	Georgia
Thailand Biennale	Thailand
The London Open	UK

Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art	Greece
Tirana Biennial	Albania
Toronto Biennial of Art	Canada
Transmediale	Germany
Triennale France	France
Triennale–India	India
TRIO Biennial	Brasil
Turin Triennial	Italy
Turku Biennial	Finland
U-Turn Quadrennial for Contemporary Art	Denmark
Ural Industrial Biennial	Russia
UNASUR Contemporary Art International Biennial	Argentina
Ural Industrial Biennial	Russia
Vancouver Biennale	Canada
Venice Architecture Biennale	Italy
Venice Biennale	Italy
Videonale Festival for Contemporary Video Art	Germany
Vienna Biennale	Austria
VIVA Excon	Philippines
Western China International Art Biennale	China
Whitney Biennial	USA
Whitstable Biennale	UK
WRO Media Art Biennale	Poland
Yerevan Biennial	Armenia
Yinchuan Biennale	China
Yokohama International Triennial of Contemporary Art	Japan
Yorkshire Sculpture International	England
Young Artists Biennial	Romania
ZERO1 Biennial	USA

Resource: Biennial Foundation website, the Universes in Universe website.

Table 15: The East Asian Wave of the Art Biennials (in chronological order)

Biennales	Founded Year	Country
Taipei Biennial	1992	Taiwan
Gwangju Biennale	1995	South Korea
Shanghai Biennale	1996	China
Busan Biennale	1998	South Korea
Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale	1998	China
Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial	2000	Japan
SeMa Biennale – Mediacity Seoul	2000	South Korea
Chengdu Biennale	2001	China
Yokohama International Triennial of Contemporary Art	2001	Japan
Guangzhou Triennial	2002	China
Beijing International Art Biennale	2003	China
Incheon Women Artists' Biennale	2004	South Korea
Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture	2005	China
Asian Art Biennial	2007	Taiwan
Aichi Triennale	2010	Japan
Western China International Art Biennale	2010	China
Setouchi Triennale	2010	Japan
CAFAM Biennale	2011	China
Changwon Sculpture Biennale	2012	South Korea
Yinchuan Biennale	2015	China
Anren Biennale	2017	China
Oku-Noto Triennale	2017	Japan

Resources: the Biennial Foundation official website, the Universes in Universe website.

2. Charts

Chart 1. The fields within fields of cultural production (Bourdieu 1993).

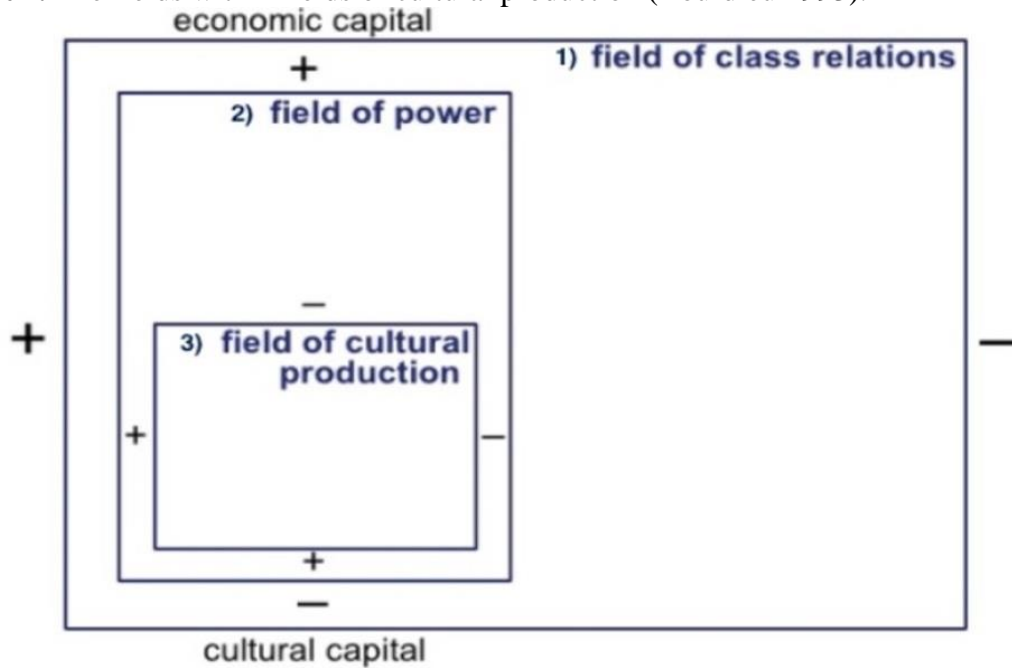


Chart 2

Distribution of the global art market in 2020, by country

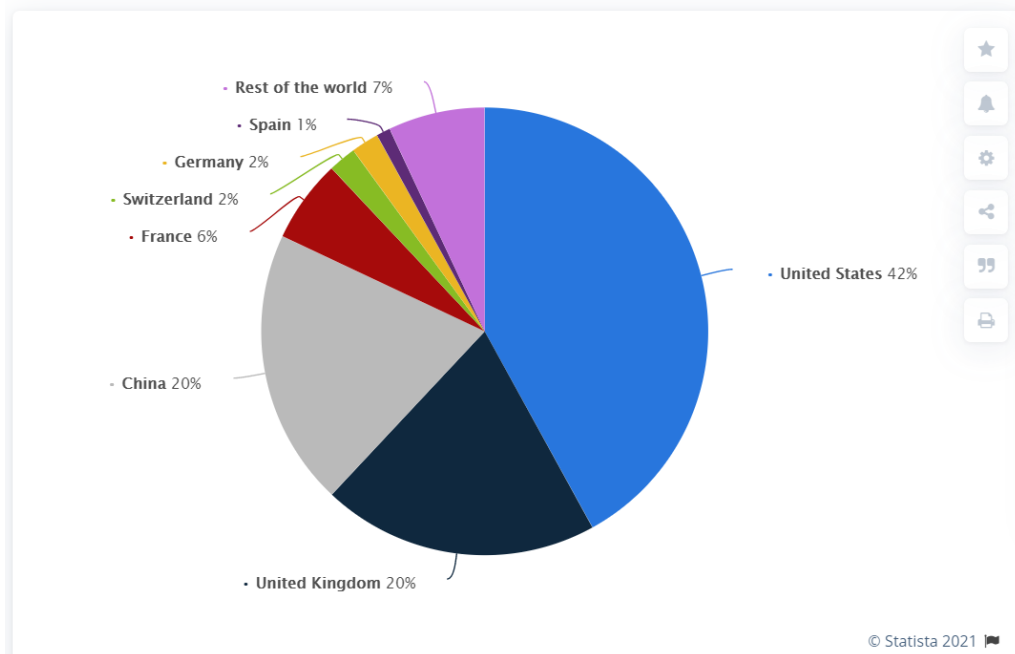


Chart 3 The East Asian Cities Hosting the Art Biennials



Chart 4

The cities hosting art biennials across the Taiwan Strait

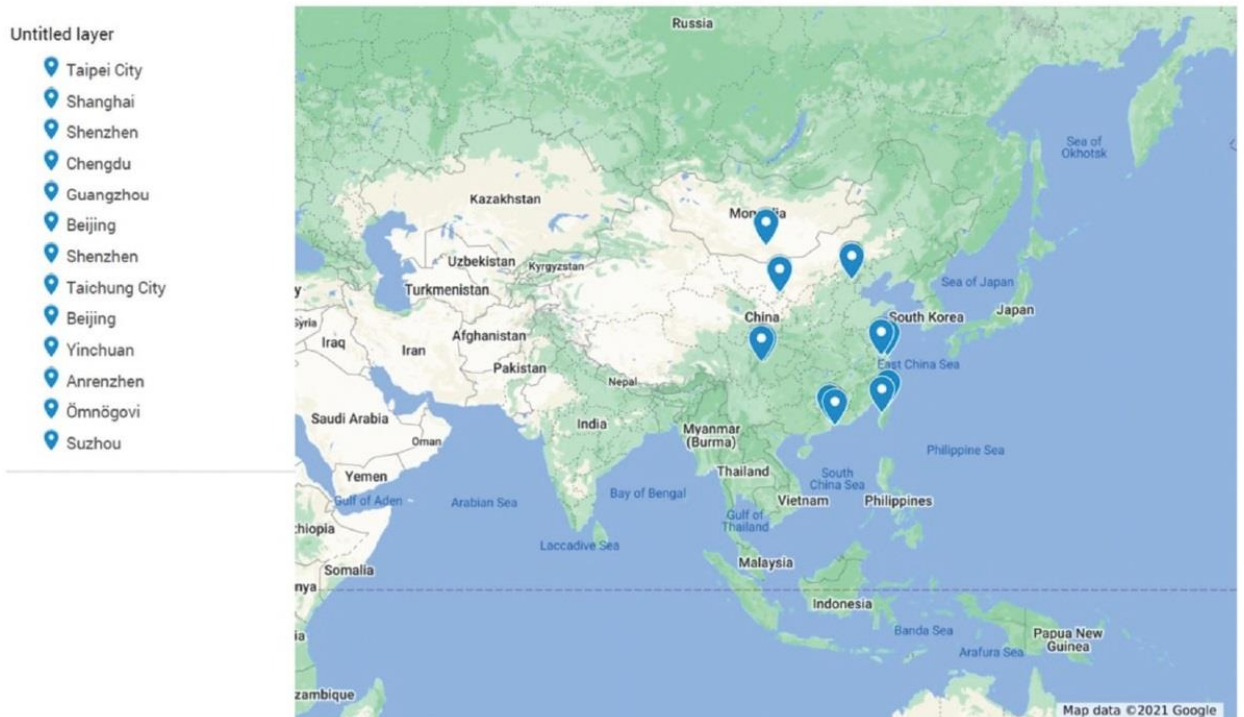


Chart 5

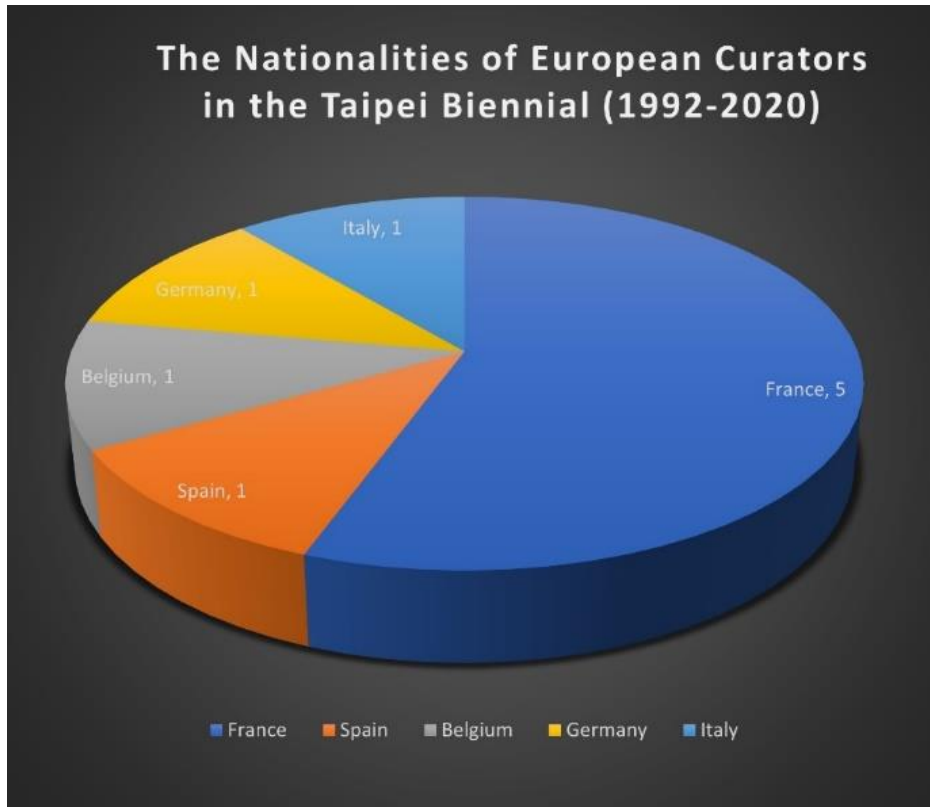


Chart 6

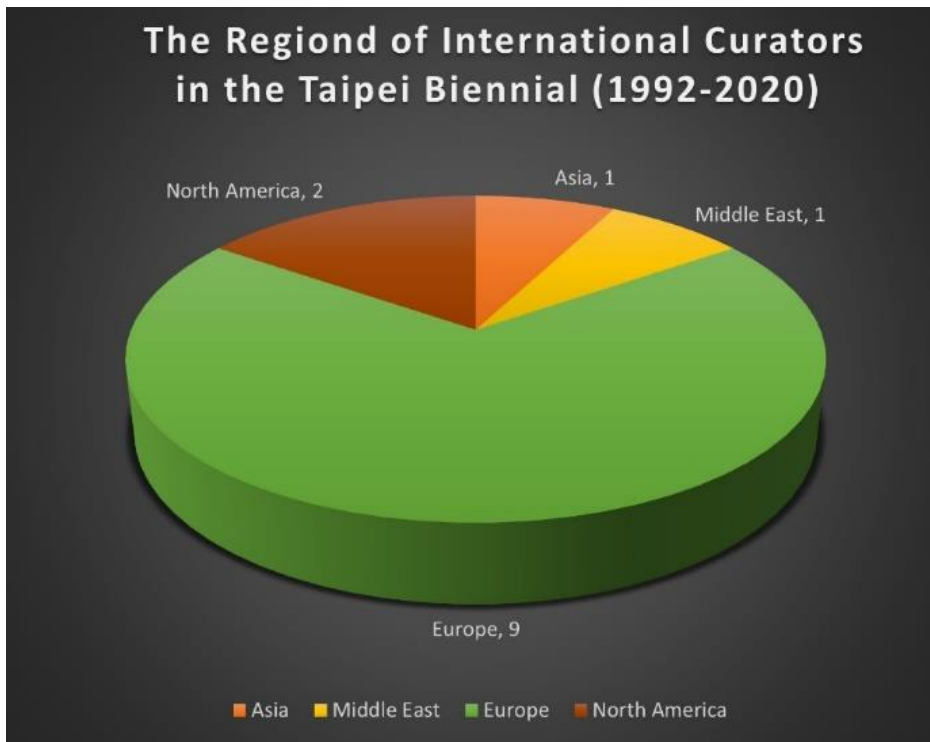


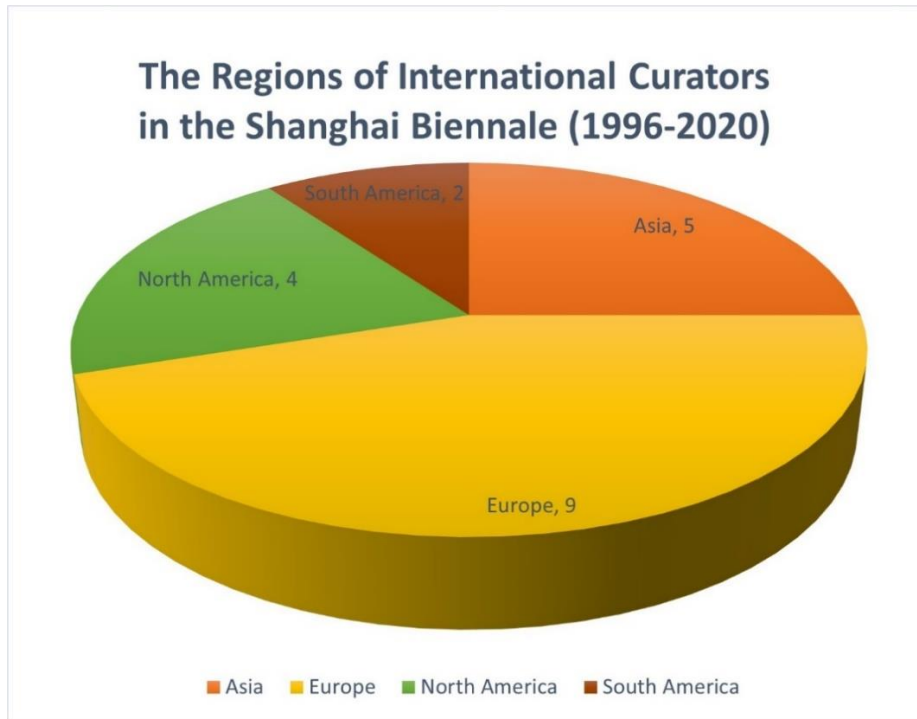
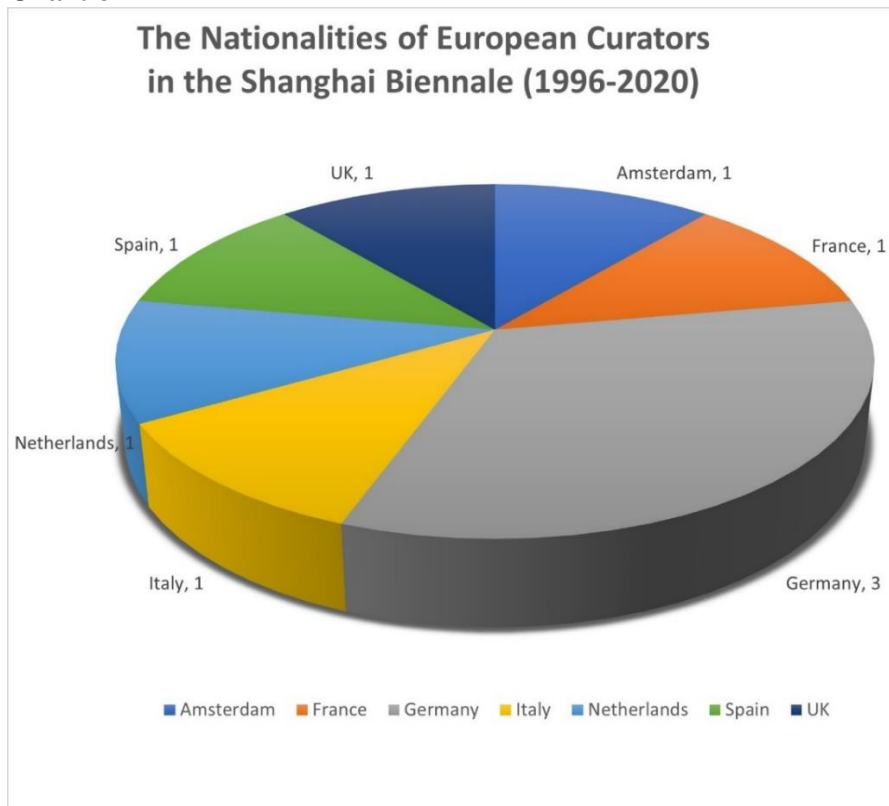
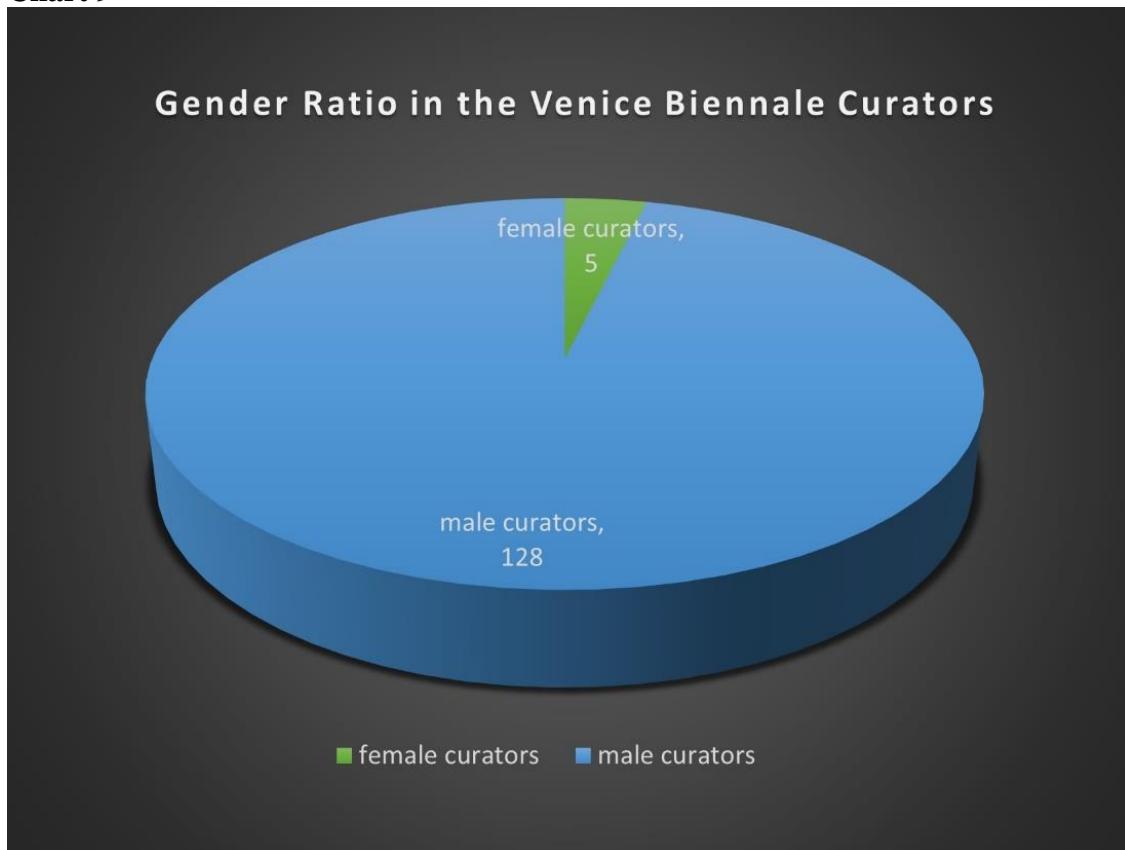
Chart 7**Chart 8**

Chart 9

1. Illustrations

Image 1. Mali WU, *The Library*, 1995, mixed media installation, courtesy of the artist and the Taiwan Pavilion, Taipei Fine Arts Museum.



Image 2. ZHANG Jianjun, *Taichi Disco*, 1996, mixed media installation, dimensions variable, courtesy of the artist and the Shanghai Biennale.

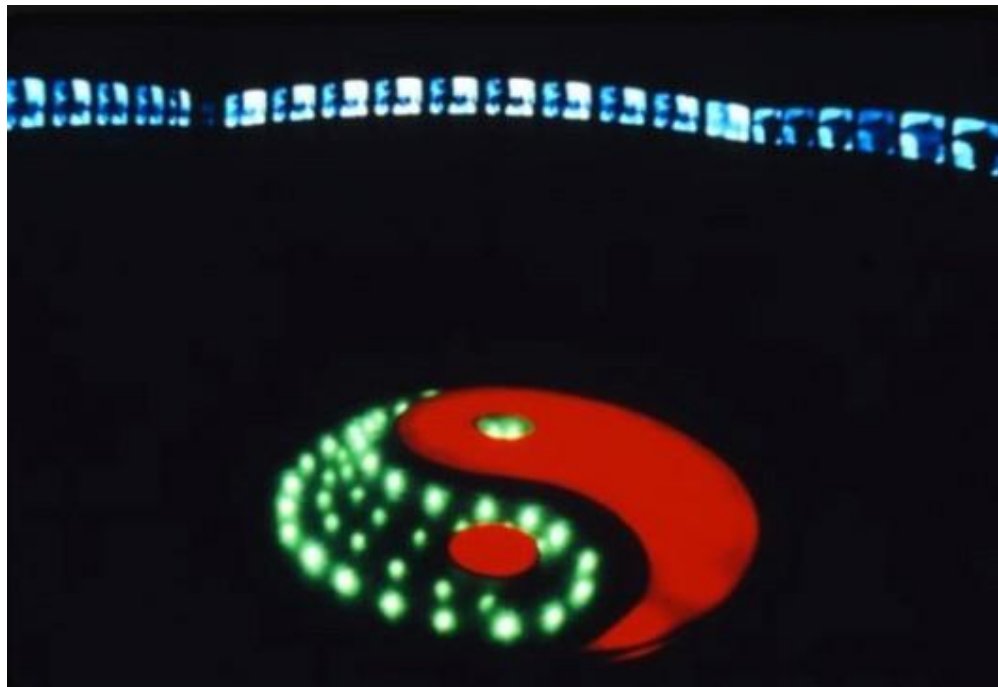


Image 3. GU Wenda, *The Lost Dynasty* series collection, 1998, broken ink calligraphy and painting, courtesy of the artist and the Shanghai Biennale.



Image 4. GU Wenda, *United Nations-China Monument: Temple of Heaven*, 1997-1998, a site-specific installation commissioned by the Asia Society in New York, courtesy of the artist and the Asia Society.



Image 5. HUANG Yongping, *Bank of Sand or Sand of Bank*, 2000, installation of sand, concrete, and cement, 350 x 600 x 430 cm, courtesy of the artist and the Shanghai Biennale.



Image 6. XIANG Liqing, *Rock Never*, 2002, cibachrome-print, 249.5 × 125 cm, courtesy of the artist and the Shanghai Biennale.



Image 7. CAO Fei, *Whose Utopia?* 2004-2006, mixed media installation, dimensions variable, courtesy of the artist and the Shanghai Biennale.



Image 8. ZHENG Chongbin, *Wall of Skies*, 2015-20, ink and acrylic on xuan paper with LED light installation, courtesy of the artist, the Ink Studio in Beijing, and the Shanghai Biennale.



Image 9. Jiu Society (FANG Di, JI Hao, and JIN Haofan), *The Community Estate Project*, 2018, mixed-media installation, dimensions variable, courtesy of the artist and the Shanghai Biennale.



Image 10. Chun-ming HOU, *God Hates You*, 1998, woodblock print, each set: 4, 179 x 89 cm, courtesy of the artist and the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.



Image 11. Michael Ming-hong LIN, *Floor Painting*, 2000, fabric printing and painting on floor, 196 pings (196 x 3.953 square yards), courtesy of the artist and the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.



Image 12. TSUI Kuang-yu, *Eighteen Copper Guardians in Shaolin Temple*, 2001-2004, installation includes video clips, DVD, photography, prints of the still images from video, courtesy of the artist and the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.

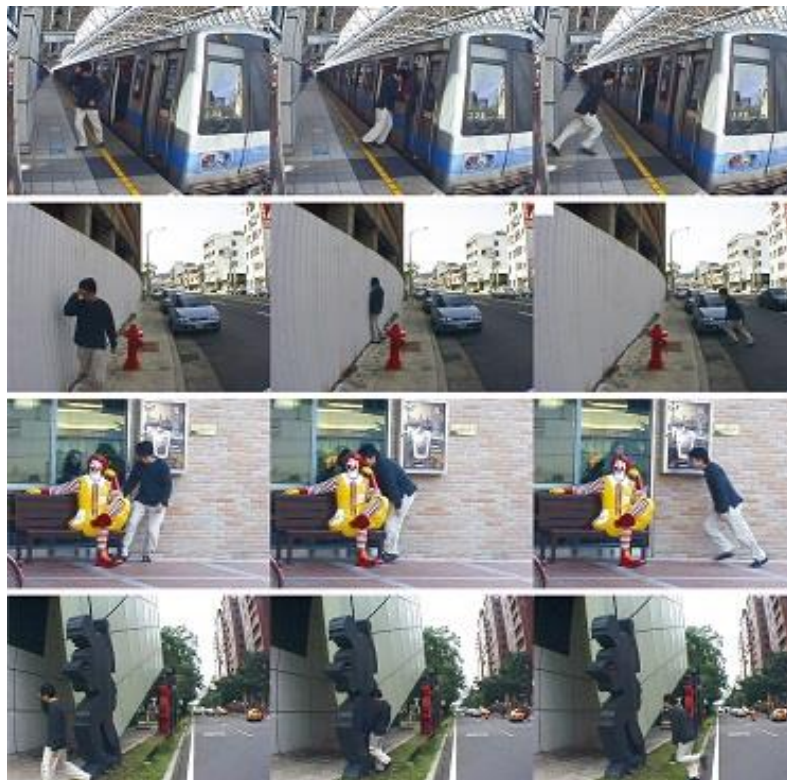


Image 13. Take2030 (Shu Lea CHEANG, Ilze Black and Alexei Blinov), *porta2030*, 2006. Digital media, chips, video installation. Courtesy of the artists and the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.



Image 14. Chung-li KAO, *The Taste of Human Flesh*, 2010-2012, slide projection with sound (15 minutes), courtesy of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum and the artist.

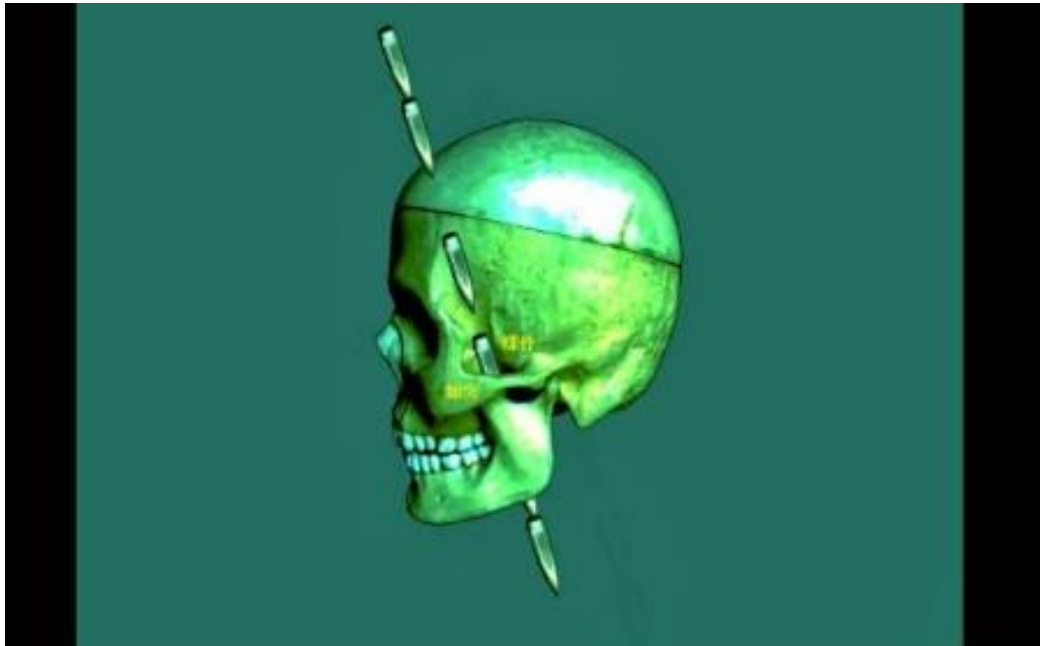


Image 15. Po-Chih HUANG, *Production Line*, 2014, installation, mixed media, dimensions variable, courtesy of the artist and the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.



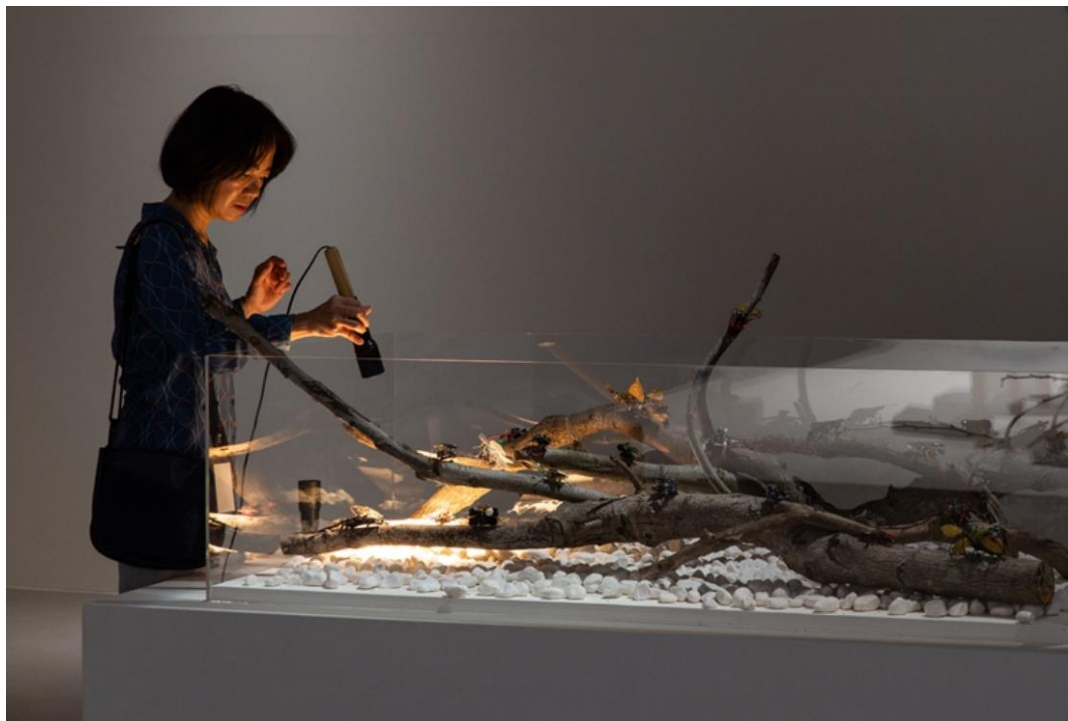
Image 16. Chia-Wei HSU, *Spirit-Writing*, 2016, two-channel video installation with still images from the video, courtesy of the artist and the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.



Image 17. Fei-hao CHEN, *Family Albums in Translation*, 2016, installation, mixed media, dimensions variable, courtesy of the artist and the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.



Image 18. CHEN Chu-Yin with Solar Insects Vivarium Workshop. *Neo Eden*, 2018. Digital media, chips, multimedia installation. Courtesy of the artists and the Taipei Fine Arts Museum.



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