

PLATFORM CHINA CONTEMPORARY ART INSTITUTE presents



THE THIRD PARTY - An exhibition in Three Acts

November 11, 2010 - January 30, 2011

Curated by Beatrice Leanza

Organized by Platform China in collaboration with BAO Atelier

THE THIRD PARTY

**An exhibition
in Three Acts**

11. 11. 2010 - 01. 30. 2011

Featuring:

1. How to Be Alone

(or Nowhere else am I safe from
the question: why here?)

Nov. 11 - Nov. 30, 2010

2. The Stranger |

Dec. 9 - Dec. 30, 2010

3. The Third Party |

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Platform China
Contemporary Art Institute
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The Third Party - Act 3:
"THE THIRD PARTY - A GROUP CELEBRATION!"

Opening: Sunday - Jan. 9, 2011 | 3 - 7 pm

Dates: Jan. 9 - 30, 2011

"An artist intent on casting off all restrictive conditions can only do so after he has clarified the relationship among artistic activity, artwork, and the public. [...] The key isn't to alter one's language or the public's involvement, but rather to change the artistic relationship between viewing and being viewed."

Zhang Peili - *The Point of Departure for Art Project no.2, 1988*

Started in November 2010, the project *The Third Party* designed itself as a three-part script to be staged monthly in individual yet interconnected exhibitions that took 'the relationship between narrative and aesthetic objects' as their field of investigation.

Since the outset, these three instantiations have been envisioned as 'points of departure, flexible and open-ended' frames of reference and critique operating in the Chinese contexts through which visual experience and conceptual structures could find alternative avenues of articulation.

Like the first and second chapters, respectively tackling issues of 'self-historicization' and 'witnessing/archiving', the third and last instalment of the show engages, in '*appropriating*' fashion, the discursive shifts of '*collaboration*'. These three topics are product of a deliberate curatorial choice aimed at gridding out both temporal and material correspondences to the larger arena of the 'contemporary' intended as a wide-ranging archive of historical and aesthetic ambivalences. As circuits of signification trafficking between work and world, the individual and the collective, and therefore between artist and public, they configure culturally specific products of both subjective narration and collective constitution.

Appropriation runs through the course of Chinese contemporary art history as an unstable and at times unattainable paradigm - doomed undialectical, it stands at the crossroads of the seemingly irreconcilable times and places of an 'incomplete', other-than-Western modern project, vacated of any deconstructive and critical potential.

Out of all its uses, which, stylistic or systemic, art historians and critics have often employed to substantiate their socio-political commentaries and localized forms of historicism over the past three decades, this project chooses to treat appropriation as a positive tension by means of which given conceptual images and interpretations can be infused, as they should, with contextually specific meanings.



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The last instalment of *The Third Party* is dubbed "*The Third Party – A Group Celebration!*".

The two hyphenated parts of the title intend to heighten the inherent circularity proper of the progressive movement of the overall project. Unlike a literary composition plotted on exclusionary sequences of cause and effect, *The Third Party* plays with strategies of association, the tracing of patterns of presence and absence that both distance and engage themselves. Not a coda nor a gran finale, this last enactment does not represent a moment of synthesis nor of disruption of former orders; on the contrary it moves further into another, alternative perceptual context that both contains and expands the scope of preceding ones. As a total project *The Third Party* is certainly a group show, one that alludes, knowingly, to its inevitable partiality and limitation as such.

The critical extensions of the dimension of 'collaboration' span over a century-long history of theoretical and practical forays bridging the artistic and the social sphere. Particularly in a Western historical lineage of interpretation, collaboration is associated with a variety of positions and experiences which, by way of a generalization, have strived to collapse the divide between artist and audience, authorship and spectatorship, by coming inscribed in a realm of agency intrinsically political and oppositional in nature.

Threaded through the genealogy of so called socially-engaged, relational practices, the deconstructive expanse of collaborative ventures in art making embraces creation as a dialogical process or oblique positioning engendering alternative forms of consensus building, promoting a participative and active pronouncement of will and independent thinking capable to bend the existing relations of power and production policing specific social constituencies. Likewise in the history of Chinese art the subversive force of collaboration recurs as both subject and object of artistic and intellectual pursuits reacting to the contextual conditions or limitations defined by overarching socio-political institutions found inadequate or simply unresponsive.

It is worth noting that under the widespread economic uncertainties traversing the global domain of art over the past two years, the sobering effect landed onto the extravagance of market-oriented productions feeding the concentric ranks of 'inner circles', has unleashed the jubilation of artists and critics celebrating a return to 'content-and-quality'-driven systems, long co-opted by the distracting lures of commercial viability and individual success. The empowering drive of collaboration and communal projects more than ever becomes a cipher for modest but necessary offerings calling upon new conceptual and practical undertakings to enact truer dialogues about the dissipation of both material and ephemeral values we once hold in common and facts have proven we have failed. A return to the ordinary, gestational rhymes of the everyday.

China has certainly been no exception. Yet again in the game of appropriations, paradigms reappear inadequate and futile.

This exhibition is therefore not an all-encompassing effort aimed at filling the blanks of Chinese art glossary under the category of 'collaborative' or 'alternative' practices - an exercise that would first require framing an understanding of the spatial and aesthetic conventions informing the workings of their official counterparts (which there could be no space here for).

Conversely "*The Third Party – A Group Celebration!*" rounds up this research process in the realm of the ordinary by transforming the exhibition in a spontaneous theatre of self-representation, an informal assemblage of *current experiments in collaborative practices from China*.

An exhibition, an archive, an experiment in participation itself, the show takes the shape of a living archive by making use of The Beehive system units, which are here



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employed both as a supporting structure and a tool for artists' interventions. China-based self-organized/independent art spaces, artistic collectives, loose groups, specific project teams and artists founding their practice on collaborative actions have been invited to submit proposals or materials that are explanatory of their work, the type of activity they do in their specific context, and what is the way they realize it as 'someone who works with others'. The exhibition is not simply a display of independent ventures, shows or projects previously realized, but an open tableau where each group partakes in a process of positive and proactive communication of concepts and ideas that stand behind the works as products of/for collective creation. This last chapter features newly created works and archival documentation provided by the participants along live performances, site-specific installations, sounds and pieces produced over the course of two months. Some of the projects are the result of impromptu collaborations emplaced to support peers not based in Beijing, others are specifically created to respond to the call of the exhibition itself.

Various balancing forces motivate the practices here presented, arguably no less politically or controversially responsive to the established systems that cannot or will not accommodate them, than its historical precursors. Challenging social or aesthetic conventions and operating on varying degrees of specificity to the sites and constituencies they are inscribed in, they compose a picture where the individual limits of conceptual and material resources are overcome by means of a supplementary, collective strategy through which a 'perceived lack or inconsistency' comes to be lived rather than resolved.

"Now has come the time for settling debts left over from the historical past. Art is, first and foremost, the artist. And, it is up to the artists to seize back the authority that they surrendered."

(Zhang Peili, 1988)

Participants:

8633 Link (Beijing), Arrow Factory (Beijing), Arthub Asia (Davide Quadrio, Bangkok; Defne Ayas, Shanghai), BAO Atelier (Beatrice Leanza/Li Naihan; Beijing), CAEP - Complete Art Experience Project (Beijing), ChART Contemporary/Open House (Cassandra and Megan Connolly; Beijing), Comfortable Collective (Shanghai), Chen Zhou/Li Ming/Li Ran/Yan Xing (Company; Hangzhou/Beijing), DDM Warehouse (Zheng Weimin; Shanghai), Donkey Institute of Contemporary Art (Michael Yuan/Yam Lau; Beijing), Double Fly Art Centre (Hangzhou/Shanghai), Everyone's East Lake Art Project (Li Juchuan; Wuhan), Falling Behind group (Beijing); Forget Art Art Collective (Beijing), Knowles Eddy Knowles group (Beijing), Homeshop (Elaine W. Ho; Beijing), Jin Shan, Little Movements Project (Liu Ding, Carol Yinghua Lu; Beijing), Libreria Borges (Chen Tong; Guangzhou), Peter Zhang/Su Chang for Mommy Foundation (Biljana Ciric; Shanghai/Beijing), Observation Society (Guangzhou), Shan Studio (Sheng Jie aka Gogo; Beijing), Subjam (Yan Jun ;Beijing).



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