

Qiuzhuang Project

Li Mu's Diary

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Prelude

2013.1.12 Sat. Cloudy

In a few days I will go back to my hometown to initiate the “Qiuzhuang Project”. My wife Zhang Fang wrote on the first page of the new notebook I bought: “The project that is going to be initiated at your hometown is brimming with uncertainties. Please do not jump into judgments so that you won’t be afraid and can see through the truth. To feel each different encounter in life with all your heart.”
Love you so much.

F 2013.1.12

1. A Library

2013.1.15 Tue. Cloudy

It took two hours by high-speed train from Suzhou to Xuzhou, and another two hours by coach from Xuzhou Bus Station to Feng County. Then I took a taxi, and after 15 minutes I arrived at Qiuzhuang of Zhuyao Village, Sunlou Town. Qiuzhuang is 6 kilometers to the south of Feng County. The roads along the way were covered in black coal soot. When I reached the west corner of Qiuzhuang, the roads started to get bumpy. In winter time the village is grey.

I departed in the morning and got home at dusk. In the past it was different. The journey to go back home used to be far more difficult.

Now I'm sitting in the house where I grew up, covered by my quilt. But my head and hands are exposed to the air. It is chilly.

Tomorrow I will go to the town to buy some stuff: an electric bicycle, table lamp and cotton-padded shoes.

I'm not sure if I should buy an abandoned bus to make it into a library. It's costly and not practical. Probably it's more feasible to just rent a house, which can also be used as my studio.

2013.1.17 Thu. Sunny

The fog dispersed. Today the sun emerged.

In the morning I walked my dog, Pipi, on the levee, seeing the vast flat ground by the river. I could probably put Richard Long's "Wood Circle" there because land for residential use is precious in the village and there isn't a lot of public land to use.

For the library, I will rent a space because it's more economical. Beauty in form isn't the top priority. I will focus more on its function.

I've also found a place for Zhong Ming, my assistant, to live. But I need to consider how to pay my second uncle. In rural villages, people tend to politely refuse money. But money has to be paid.

Yesterday I paid a visit to Yang Gaoju, my painting pal in middle school. He didn't receive an offer from an art academy and then started his printing business in a town in Feng County. He works during the day, and in the evening when the rolling shutter doors are closed, he paints. He has had a liking for painting Mao since middle school. He still paints Mao's portraits along with oil paintings featuring migrant workers. He was curious about my practice. I showed him my website. Some former schoolmates thought my work was beyond comprehension. Yang Gaoju told them: "He creates with his mind while we create with paints." I think he understands my art.

I visited Wang Gaoqi at his grocery store. He lied on his bed in the inner room, saying that his waist didn't feel right. I told him I intended to start a library in the village. He said without hesitation: "It's pointless. We don't need a library here."

My father always says that peasants don't read so what I do will be in vain and seem ridiculous. I told him I didn't care and I just wanted to do what I liked to do. I emphasized: plants growing in the desert are the most precious.

2013.1.18 Fri. Sunny

Time really flies. A day just passed without much achievement.

2013. 1. 19 Sat. Sunny

In the morning, I went to the county to visit Mr. Wei Yishan, my art teacher in middle school. A few years ago he suffered a hemiplegia due to a cerebral hemorrhage. So he couldn't recognize me. His wife told me now his brain was just like a one-year-old and barely remembered anything. Just two years ago when I visited him, he could still take me to see his paintings and we made the agreement that next time I would bring my paintings to show him.

His wife talked about the hardships they went through when they just got married. He sat to the side, listening, like a child. His eyes were brimming with tears. When I was about to leave, I hugged him, tightly.

2013. 1. 20 Sun. Snowy

I rented Wang Qianjin's son's house as the library. Wang has been a friend since childhood. The two-story house is located along the street and faces the north. While his son and his family live upstairs, I will use the two rooms downstairs. I visited my elementary school teacher Wei Yongming, telling him my vision of this library and invited him to be the librarian. Like many others, he also thought my idea was unrealistic, pointless and unprofitable. I left feeling quite helpless. Half an hour later, he came to visit me and said: "I would support you, because this is a research project. Since it is research, you'll have to accept it whether it's a success or not."

It's snowing lightly outside. This winter seems particularly chilly. I constantly remind myself: Don't be lazy.

2013. 1. 22 Tue. Cloudy

Uncle Fan Jingsi passed on a message that I should take out RMB 5,000 as rental fee for Wang Gaoli, and he could keep as much as he wanted. It was far beyond my father's expectation. He was a bit unhappy. After some negotiation, we agreed on RMB 3,500.

I have chilblains again on my hands, which reminded me of when I was a kid. I had chilblains on my hands and feet every winter. They turned red and swollen, even festered, but would heal when spring came.

2013. 1. 25 Fri. Sunny

I invited my second uncle, Fan Jingsi and Wang Gaoli to make furniture for the library. They are experienced carpenters. It took them only two days to make the book-shelves and tables. The only things I needed to add were lights and chairs.

I went to the county town in the morning, visiting some of my old painting fellows. We haven't met for twenty years and are now all middle-aged men. The past seems not that far away but still time flies. We had lunch at a restaurant which seemed

quite dirty. The toilet outside was also filthy. A big pit on the ground was the place to poo and a bucket was the place to pee. Speaking of restaurants and toilets, nothing seemed to have changed. This is exactly how I remembered the county town.

I had intended to make a neon sign reading "A Library" on top of the front door of the library. But it seemed neon light was outdated and no one in the county could make it. I had no choice but to ask Yang Gaoju to make some luminescent characters, which are considered fashionable. Things here are always like this. New things take the place of the old, ruthlessly.

2013. 1. 27 Sun. Cloudy

I went to the county town this morning, and saw a restaurant holding an opening ceremony. On a stage were two women who were scantily dressed, singing and dancing in the chilly wind and the roaring of cars.

2013. 1. 30 Wed. Foggy

A classmate of my second elder sister, who is an official at Feng County, called, saying that for the sake of avoiding future troubles, it would be better to communicate about the library project with local authorities beforehand and to gain the mayor's support before opening it. If the cultural department of the county came to look for trouble, the library might have to be shut down.

I tried to reach the secretary of our village committee. He knew I wanted to open a library, and he kept saying he was busy to avoid meeting me. I know he thought the library would not make a profit. He once suggested that I give him the money instead so that he could use it to support the poor. I insisted that it was not money this village lacked, but spirit. I had no intention to acquire support from the authorities, and didn't want them to be involved. So I decided not to "startle" them. If they come to look for trouble later, I'm not afraid.

The chilblains on my hands are getting serious. I haven't had chilblains for many years. My body is not accustomed to living here. From the bottom of my heart, I don't like this place. After this project, I must leave.

2013. 1. 31 Tue. Rainy

If what I do is nothing but following rules and procedures, it would be quite pointless. If I can challenge some rules, blur some boundaries, break some conventions and try something new, it will be very meaningful.

Tonight my father said he wanted me to buy some books on agriculture, duck breeding and rabbit breeding for the library. I said, quite decisively, "No. I don't think anyone in this village would read such books. I don't want to just display some books to show people it's a library. If I buy those kinds of books, it will be a waste." My father mumbled: "Even less people would take a look at those art books you buy."

Hong Wei, my childhood playmate, sat down. He smoked, and spit on the floor I had just mopped clean. Can I forbid people to spit here? Can I forbid people to smoke? No. The habit of spitting is like tobacco addiction, and is already embedded in their bodies.

Looking at my mother, who is kind as always, I'm so glad I could spend some time living with her. After dinner, my father went out and my mother started to do the washing. I felt awkward and said "when the chilblains on my hands heal I will help you wash the dishes." She replied with a smile: "Men are supposed to do 'big' things. How could I let you wash the dishes?"

2013. 2. 3 Sun. Rainy

Yang Gaoju installed the luminescent characters on top of the front door of the library. It read "A 图书馆/A LIBRARY". He didn't charge a lot and took RMB1,300.

2013. 2.4 Mon. Sleet

In the morning, I coded the books and installed a wifi device at the library. The installer, a young guy, was curious about the books. He saw the book donated to A Library by Ellen Zweig. It featured paintings of female genitals from the beginning to the end. He browsed it again and again. And murmured: "Fuck. What is this?"

There was always someone curiously peeping into the library, which interrupted my work. I lowered the rolling door so that no one could interrupt me and I could focus on my work without distraction. However, why did I come back here in the first place? To isolate myself and the village with a rolling door? I had to open the door to let people know what I was doing. I didn't want to build a wall between me and the villagers.

Fan Jingsi, Wang Gaoli and my second uncle turned down the money (300 yuan each with meals and tobacco) paid for their construction of the library furniture. My father bought some cigarettes and wine with the money which he asked me to give them. They accepted.

In the afternoon, village secretary Wang Jiayun called, saying that he had time to meet with me. Zhang Fang and I went to his house, a quite luxurious two-story building. He showed me the paintings and calligraphic works he collected, quite passionately. And he also showed us a piece of Lantian jade from Xinjiang. Speaking of the library, I told him it was an art project of mine. He said: "In the neighboring village a retired teacher initiated a library and the country government allocated 200,000 yuan for the project and nominated him as a 'model worker'."

At dusk, I went to the county town to pick up Na Yingyu (Lao Na). Last year when I spoke about the Qiuzhuang Project in New York, Beijing-based artist Na Yingyu also stayed in New York as a resident artist. He thought it would be hard for me to complete this project. Hence we decided he would start to live in my village when the project started so that he could witness my failure. Now he came to honor the appointment.

It snowed in the evening.

2013. 2.7 Thu. Overcast

The books looked so good when they were put on the bookshelves but they didn't seem compatible with the village. Would no one come to read as everyone assumed? The project started from incompatibility. It was like a chess game and now I would play chess with my fellow villagers. It doesn't matter who wins and who loses.

It snowed again and it's getting colder. The chilliness often makes people impatient.

Yesterday I went to the Temple of Literature in the county town. It used to be the Museum of Feng County and now it's a place to worship Confucius. On the west side

of the yard there were some broken stone tablets collected from the villages. One of the stone tablets had been cut in half but was now repaired into one piece. I looked at the backside of the tablet and found out it had been used as two mangers. I found it interesting. Civilization was often preserved by people in this way.

Lao Na wanted to read the Annals of Feng County so I borrowed one from my classmate Wang Mingtao. Such books could not be found in book stores. Spending the night reading the book, Lao Na said after Liu Bang, Emperor Gaozu of Han, and a couple of generals, this place hadn't fostered any other talents. This showed bad *feng shui*. Before the Song Dynasty, the local land used to be fertile and rice was planted here. But because of the continuing inundation of the Yellow River, the once fertile land became sandy soil. My father said at the west end of our village people once dug out a pair of water vats and found evidence of an architectural foundation, which proved that the sandy soil used to be covered by fertile soil and architecture.

2013.2.12 Tue. Sunny

The chilblains on my hands are getting worse. Those who see my hands are shocked. I tell them: "I haven't had chilblains for years."

On Chinese New Year's Eve, we set off two beautiful fireworks and the kids living next door climbed onto the roof to cheer. The next day a little boy came and dismantled the case of fireworks, wanting to take a closer look.

Kowtow is a tradition here. On the first day of New Year, people would go to their seniors' homes before dawn to kowtow to show their respect and good wishes for them. Certainly, I also followed such a tradition.

The library was open to the public on the first day of Chinese New Year. I set off two rolls of firecrackers. Children and grown-ups all came to join the fun. There were three baskets of candies on the desks. They ate some and stuffed some into their pockets. Apparently, children are more interested in books and they were very happy. The grown-ups seemed a bit confused. They browsed the books randomly, and then left as they felt they didn't understand.

On the second day of the New Year, my second brother-in-law expressed his opinion about my library during dinner. He said I was "smart," making use of the ignorance of villagers to make art. I demonstrated to the world the ignorance of this village through this library. I didn't explain much and just said "you can think so." My

nephew Zhaozhao thought the idea of the library showed my brain “malfunctioned” as it wouldn’t make me money. He keeps suggesting that I put three slot machines in the library to earn some money from the kids.

Na Yingyu drank too much. He said he felt dizzy and slept until dinner.

This is an ordinary and plain small village on the East China plain. There’s nothing special about it. However, it has almost all the problems faced by Chinese rural villages. Everything is plain here. So plain that no visible conflicts can be seen.

2013.2.13 Wed. Sunny

In the morning, former county head Li Yu, the mayor of Sunlou Town and the person in charge of cultural affairs came to the library. The county head used to be a classmate of my father-in-law. Zhang Fang gave him a call, saying that I wanted to initiate a library in the rural village. In the library he asked my cousin “Don’t you recognize me? You should recognize me, ten years ago you saw me every day on TV.”

They asked me “do you need assistance or promotion of any kind?” I said “no, thank you”.

My father felt at ease as the visit of the former county head and alcalde meant no one would come to pick on us.

2013.2.14 Thu. Sunny

The Netherlands consulate was not sure about whether they would sponsor my project and wanted to know more about it. I wrote to Charles Esche (director of Van Abbemuseum), saying that I would need funding and other specific support. He hasn’t replied to me yet.

2013.2.15 Fri. Overcast

Though the library is open to the public, there seems a gap between the books and the people here. People are not interested in reading. No matter how many great books are put in the library, they won't come to read.

2013.2.16 Sat. Overcast

In the afternoon, I went to the county bus station to pick up Zhong Ming. He is 26-years-old and just graduated from college. He looks neat and his eyes are clear. He doesn't talk a lot. I decided to make him my assistant though he never touched a video camera before.

There were tractors and buses passing by the library gate constantly. The disruption of the noises and flying dust, plus the villagers who dropped by from time to time, made it hard for me to focus on my work. The villagers thought I initiated the library in order to make money or to earn a reputation. Some also said I came back to the village because I couldn't make a living outside it.

Lao Na went back to Beijing. I'm not sure if he will come back, though he said so. I feel a bit lonely, which reminds me of the words Zhang Fang wrote on my notebook: You will explore alone in the sea that has never been explored.

2013.2.19 Tue. Overcast

I lowered the rolling door of the library to prevent the wind and also to notify people the library was closed today. But still people came. Some were children and some were grown-ups coming together with their children. I didn't want to turn them down. So I let them in.

The kids would pick a book, browsing through, and then pick another one. I asked one kid to come forward, asking "what do you see in the book". He thought for quite a while, saying "man". I said "you try to read it for ten more minutes and then tell me what you see".

Ten minutes later, he gave the book back to me. It was a photography album featuring a lesbian couple. No man appeared in it. I asked: "What did you see?" He said: "I saw them in the car, sleeping, taking a shower, and reading maps..."

I said: "What you think is the relationship between them?" Two other kids volunteered to answer. One thought they were sisters and the other, friends. He didn't answer and just shook his head. I asked again: "If they are not sisters or friends, what are they?" He said: "I don't know." After a pause, he asked me: "What are they?" I said: "Lovers." The three kids looked a bit shy and ran away, laughing.

2013.2.20 Wed. Sunny

Early in the morning the head of Cultural Center of Sunlou Town came to the library. After a brief introduction from me, he said the cultural center would donate some agriculture-related books to the library. Leaders are always too impatient to listen to others. They make decisions without any discussion with you.

It's getting colder and Zhong Ming caught a cold.

He is a man of few words. The decision to make him my assistant was intuitive. Now it seems he is not good at communicating with people and lacks the capacity to adapt.

I assigned him a task: to write a diary entry every day.

I'm wondering if he's capable of the job.

I need to trust my instinct. He has innocent and pure eyes. I need to be patient to wait for him to find the right state.

The cultural section of the Netherlands consulate wrote to me again, deciding that they would not sponsor my project. I felt quite at a loss.

The project has already been initiated. Can I quit now? Certainly not.

2013.2.23 Sat. Sunny

Yesterday I left the village in the morning and at dusk I was in Shanghai. It felt like I was in a different world. The water in Shanghai tastes horrible. It feels like bleach. In terms of my artistic practice, I feel like a man who just tried to walk without his walking sticks.

2013.2.26 Tue. Overcast

Charles wrote back, saying that he wasn't able to find more funds to support my project. Davide Quadrio (director of Art Hub Asia) came up with an idea: I could draw some proposals of Qiuzhuang Project in watercolor and then sell them at the price of USD200 each. In this way I could raise some funds for the project.

2013.3.6 Wed. Sunny

At the seminar organized at the Goethe Institute, my friends discussed the "Qiuzhuang Project" and raised many questions.

Liu Ding thought this was an unfair project. I brought contemporary art into peasants' living space, which would bring immeasurable damage to the peasants and the village as it would break its previous balance. In the meantime, peasants in this case were used as tools by artists and intellectuals. Hu Yun thought this was cultural colonization and I hereby was a cultural colonist. Though it might be unintentional, unconsciously I played the role as an accomplice of cultural colonization.

It was hard for me to explain and defend myself at that occasion. I'm not good at that. So I just listened. I sensed bias, narrow-mindedness and arrogance.

I didn't think it important to defend myself for I had faith in what I was doing.

There's no need for explanation. I wanted to carry on. When I complete the project, the result will reveal itself. The questions wouldn't be solved by language but by action.

2013.3.10 Sun. Sunny

I painted ten watercolor paintings and five of them were sold. The other five are still waiting for their buyers. I feel at ease. Now I can start to work.

When I am outside of the village, I see this project as a huge art project. But now that I'm in the village, I feel the project is so tiny, like ripples caused by a small stone thrown into the river.

In the afternoon there was heavy wind and the village became all dusty. It took only a few minutes before the library was covered by a layer of dust. The wind was heavy enough to even blow the books out of the shelves.

Willows have started to sprout. It's getting warmer. The baby bird my father is raising came out from its egg today.

2. A Zigzag Ladder

2013.3.11 Mon. Sunny

I started to stick to my plan to reproduce the collection of the Van Abbemuseum. Three years ago when Charles Esche and I had a talk at the dinner party for the exhibition "Double Infinity", he asked me: "Li Mu, what's your take on this exhibition and the communication it's evoked?" I said: "In Shanghai and Beijing there is an abundance of exhibitions and communications of this kind. Such communication is superficial." Then he asked me: "What kind of communication is in-depth?" I said: "Why not show your collection of art in my hometown, which is a rural village? It is remotely-located, poor and has no contemporary art." He got a bit excited: "This is a crazy idea."

It took us over two years to prepare for this crazy idea. Now it's time to make it true.

I hired my cousin Lai Yuan and his mentor Meng Xianping to produce American minimalist Sol LeWitt's *Untitled, Wall Structure*. It's a ladder-like abstract structure made of aluminium alloy. Sol LeWitt wrote instructions and drew sketches for the work and the final production was up to assistants or museum workers. There was no ready-made aluminium-alloy square tubes of the sizes Sol LeWitt described. So Meng Xianping contacted a factory who agreed to produce some square tubes according to our requirements.

John Kormeling's light installation "HI HA" was another work I was going to reproduce. I wanted Yang Gaoju to produce it. He felt at a loss after looking at the picture. He never saw the bulbs and materials used in the original work. I wondered if I should be more flexible and choose to use different kinds of bulbs and materials.

I checked the pictures Zhong Ming took in the evening. Very good. I was very delighted. I gave him unsparing praise and encouragement.

2013.3.12 Tue. Rainy

It's been thundering and raining since this morning.

I got a call from Meng Xianping at noon. He said the plant was unwilling to produce the aluminium-alloy square tube according to the specifications I asked for, which left us with no option but to choose a similar size.

2013.3.16 Sat. Sunny

The ten pieces of watercolor have all been sold. After we sold six at the price of USD 2,000 each, Van Abbemuseum collected the other four at the price of USD 4,000 each.

I started to have faith in Zhong Ming's work. As long as trust is built, things will go smoothly.

2013.3.19 Tue. Sunny

Perhaps I caught a cold. I felt dizzy and went to bed early.

I am not satisfied with Zhong Ming's work. The biggest problem is that he cannot communicate with people. It seems he's used to living in his own world.

I gave him several requirements: 1. As the library had been open for over a month, we'd need to film villagers' attitudes towards it; 2. When filming conversations, he needed to stay as close to the person as possible in case the sound was not loud enough; 3. He needed to pay attention to wind direction during the interview; and 4. As it's dusty in spring, he needed to pay more attention to the camera. The dust and sandstorm could damage the machine.

Sol LeWitt's "Wall Structure" has been completed. It took Lai Yuan, Meng Xianping, Meng's wife and one of their apprentices four days to produce 15 replicas.

It cost me 4,800 yuan and I bought them a dinner, 200 yuan.

I wanted to give 14 replicas to 14 families for free. And the other would be displayed in a public space.

My father didn't think it's worth investing so much money on these things. I told him: "That guy didn't ask for much. He's an honest man." He thought I was so naïve and said "that guy made a lot of money from you". I didn't say anything but in my mind I thought he "guessed the heart of a gentleman with his own mean measure".

My eldest sister and brother-in-law came to help me paint the two walls alongside the main road of the village. I wanted to reproduce two of Sol LeWitt's wall paintings on them. My brother-in-law is a very honest man. He didn't understand why I wanted to do this project. Zhong Ming said "Li Mu is practicing Tao." That made my brother-in-law unhappy: "If he is practicing, how about his family? Does he want to abandon them?"

I was a bit heartbroken. I felt my close relatives didn't understand me at all. My eldest sister always stressed that my brother-in-law could make 300 yuan a day by working. When they had dinner and were about to leave, I gave them an envelope in which I put 1,000 yuan. She refused to accept. But I insisted to give her the envelope, so she took it.

Many trees are starting to sprout. The air is getting dry. It is very dusty. My nostrils are full of black dust. I feel my appearance is dusty and dirty. The village's roads were teeming with the enormous noise and dust caused by heavy trucks passing by. From the bottom of my heart, I don't like this place at all.

2013.3.20 Wed. Sunny

Meng Xianping and Lai Yuan came early in the morning to install Sol LeWitt's *Wall Structure*. We installed one on the back wall of Fan Beizhan's house, which is right next to the library. The cement wall is grey while the work is white.

It didn't take long before Fan Beizhan's wife came to me, furious. She said "The sign saying "No Advertisements" has already been put on the wall. How could you still put that structure onto it?" I told her "This is not an advertisement. It's art by an American artist." She asked "Art? You're going to draw flowers and birds on it?" "Nope." She put on her unhappy face: "Then what on earth do you want people to see? So ugly!" I said "I had told Beizhan about this. If you don't want me to install it, I can take it down." She didn't say another word and left.

The work on wall looks like a ladder but it is in fact zigzag-shaped and cannot be used as a ladder. So people now call it "zigzag ladder".

Teacher Wei Yongming, the librarian, took a "ladder" home and installed it onto the door of his living room. He placed items such as a tea caddy, cups, shampoo bottles and vases in the different grids of the "ladder".

My second elder sister and her husband also took one. My brother-in-law didn't like the design as it couldn't be used as a ladder and looked like the symbol of the Nazis.

In the end, due to my sister's insistence, it was installed onto the wall in their living room and nothing was placed on it. It would be appreciated only as a piece of art.

A distant relative who I call aunt asked me if she could put the cross-stitch work by her daughter-in-law on the wall of the library. As it was quite spacious here and many people would come, she hoped someone would buy it. I said: absolutely. In the next afternoon, a 3-meter-wide cross-stitch version of *Beauties from the Dream of the Red Chamber* was brought to the library. I asked her the price. She told me her target price would be 60,000 yuan. She also told me she heard an embroidered *Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival* was sold for 100,000 yuan.

2013.3.21 Thu. Sunny

My uncle Li Taifeng took a "ladder" and hung it in their younger son Haitao's room. When Haitao came back, he and his wife could use it as some kind of shelf. Both of his sons were admitted by colleges and found jobs in cities after graduation. They came back home only during the Chinese New Year.

Uncle carried the "ladder" home. It didn't take long before he felt breathless. He took a heart pill and sat down for quite a while to recover from the breathlessness. He used to be a strong and capable man when he was young. But later, because he took a lot of medicine to deal with his rheumatoid, he started to have some heart problems.

Uncle Fan Jingsi took a "ladder". His house was old-style and too small to put the ladder inside. So he hung it in the corridor area and put various crafts on it. He retired from the track maintenance unit of Feng County. His son lives in town and his wife is also there, taking care of their grandchild. So he lives alone. He planted cherry trees, persimmon trees, date trees, apricots and chocho trees in his yard. And now the apricots and cherries have bloomed. He said he wanted to use color paper to wrap the grids of the "ladder" to create a background for the crafts. Different crafts would have different colors as a background. It would look better that way.

2013.3.22 Fri. Overcast

I don't believe in "the good nature of human". It is decided upon at birth whether one is good or evil in nature. The evil genes of my grandma were passed onto my

father. The evilness is deeply-rooted in his marrow. A nurturing environment and education might impose certain restrictions upon him but couldn't change him.

My father felt it was a waste to give the aluminium-alloy "ladders" to people for free. He wanted me to give one to my eldest sister and to keep several at home. At such times, I saw his narrow-mindedness and selfishness.

I wanted to spend more time with my parents. But I feel my father doesn't really care about that.

Zhong Ming accidentally erased the video tape after drinking. We will have to find time to re-shoot the important scenes.

2013.3.23 Sat. Sunny

I went to town today to help Wei Yishan, my painting teacher, to sort out his paintings.

The storage in the balcony was full of waste. After removing all this waste, there was a shabby shelf stuffed with his oil paintings. I felt quite touched when taking these paintings out one by one. I felt I saw a different world within the muddy environment. For the past several decades, he never gives up painting. He is a true artist, a man passionate for art. The colors on the paintings have started to fade, and the frames were cheaply-made and covered with dust. He keeps painting at Feng County though it doesn't earn him reputation and fortune. It's almost a miracle. His paintings look plain, without much technique. I'm not sure about the value of his paintings. What I'm interested in is the integrity of a man - a middle-school teacher who never gives up painting. I wish I could be able to view these paintings with an objective eye, but I can't as he was my teacher.

He is losing his memory and unable to take care of himself. He can't remember me or recognize his family. But he never forgets his paintings. He constantly takes the dusty paintings out from the balcony and puts them inside his bedroom, one by one. He wants to guard these paintings. His family would bring the paintings back to the balcony. The next day he would place them in his bedroom again.

I came back to the village at dusk and gave uncle Li Taijin a "ladder". Uncle Taijin was very happy as he liked the "ladder" very much. He used to be the chef at the village so whenever there was a wedding or funeral he would go to help with the cooking. Now he works at a public institute in the county, still as a chef. He can have the

weekends to rest and have pension insurance. He and his family are all believers in “God” and have a picture of Jesus in their living room.

Lai Yuan asked for a “ladder”. He installed it on the wall and planned to use the grids as photo frames for his future wedding pictures. He is of a marriageable age but he doesn’t have a girlfriend yet.

2013.3.24 Sun. Overcast

I went to sort out teacher Wei’s paintings today. I found this was a huge task as I realized the importance of those archival documents. I didn’t want to focus only on the paintings but their relation with him, the overall environment and the era. I wanted to sort out the life of a man rather than merely his paintings.

2013.3.26 Tue. Rainy - Sunny

My father took his “ladder”. He hung it horizontally under the ceiling of the corridor, and used it to hang his bird cages. This year there will be over 100 canaries at our home. Some have already come out of their eggs. He made over 8,000 yuan last year by selling birds. So he’s getting more confident this year and decided to raise more birds.

2013.3.29 Fri. Overcast

Shun’er (Li Changshun) came to collect his “ladder” and hung it on the side wall of his living room. He wanted to put the pictures of his son there. He showed us his son’s pre-wedding photos. But the girl didn’t have a good reputation so they gave up the marriage.

Dongdong is the son of my fourth uncle. His family built a house for him three years ago but he still hasn’t found a wife yet. The two-story building is almost empty inside.

The “ladder” was hung on the side wall of the living room. Dongdong said he wanted fill the grids with mirrors and some classical Chinese books.

Yaoyao and Nannan, who live upstairs in the library, are about to have a baby. They took a “ladder” and said when the baby was born they would put his pictures in the grids. They wanted to add one picture every year so that all the grids would be filled when the baby grew up.

Xiaotong, who studied in LA, paid a visit and talked a lot about his feelings of this project. He said to turn something very familiar to the villagers into western contemporary art through the villagers’ own hands was a highly violent act. I said the power of culture seemed feeble in the face of physical profits. What promoted the changes in village was profit rather than spirit.

2013.4.7 Sun. Sunny

Li Gongzuo’s wife came to ask for a “ladder”. I told her all “ladders” had been distributed. She left, quite disappointed.

After some consideration, I decided to give her the “ladder” that was supposed to be kept for my eldest sister. Li Gongzuo is one year older than me and is the head of our production team and member of the security team of Sunlou Town. We hung out a lot when we were kids. But now he looks quite like an “officer” and I tend to keep a distance from him.

Li Gongzuo’s wife got the “ladder” as she wished. She took it home and hung it on the wall of her living room, using it as a bookshelf for her son.

Lianying is poorly educated but he’s the richest in the village. He buys planks that have been processed by the villagers and sells them to factories in the south to make money. People called him “Wang Millionaire”. Years ago, Wu Mao, the “ten-thousand-yuan household” of the neighboring village, wanted Lianying to marry his retarded daughter, Ying. Lianying refused but was beaten badly by his father. He was forced to marry Ying, who later gave birth to two sons who were both mentally retarded. But people say though Ying is a bit retarded, it’s her who has brought him the fortune.

Ying came to take the “ladder” and used a pedicab to carry it to their house right alongside the main road. They have a very big yard to store the planks. She firmly refused to let me take a picture of her as she thought she was not good-looking. Lianying’s office is very small and there’s a boss table, a tropical fish tank and a wall calendar featuring the photo of Yao Ming. There’s no room for the “ladder” in his office. So it was put in the corner of his factory for the moment.

2013.4.10 Wed. Sunny

New leaves are grown from the trees. There's green everywhere, imbuing the air with a sense of vitality and hope. There're few people on the street and almost no young people could be spotted. People are all busy making money. Only the elderly stay at home to look after the kids.

Zhong Ming altered the setting of the recording mode of the camera, so the videos we took are soundless.

Lao Na called, saying he would come in a few days.

2013.4.12 Fri. Sunny

Zhong Ming's performance is not satisfactory. He can't do interviews or conversations. There is weakness and laziness lying in every one of us. How to deal with them? Try to overcome them or just to let it be?

Aunt Yanliu came to have a chat with me. She said her family and store were all a mess. Her husband, Wang Gaoqi, lost the confidence to live because they don't have a boy (they have two daughters) and he sleeps in bed all day long. In rural villages, people still prefer boys. Only a few families don't have a boy. Their business also went down. I constantly see convinced Christians leading messy lives. I wonder "if you cannot handle your family life, how can you spread the gospel to others?"

The circular fluorescent lamp for Dan Flavin's work is still nowhere to be bought. I checked online and found out I could buy some from South America. That's highly impossible for me. I looked into it a little bit further and found out a factory in Foshan, Guangdong Province, produced such lamps. So I contacted the manufacturer in Foshan, but was told lamps of this kind were currently not in production. What do I do?

Wang Xueyi took a "ladder" and hung it in his daughter's room. His daughter is a second-year student at high school and comes back home every weekend. He and I have been neighbors since we were kids and now he makes a living by raising pigs and working for plank processing plants. His job is to cut out the extra parts of the trunks to make them fit for the processing machine.

2013.4.13 Sat. Sunny

Li Changbiao took the last “ladder”. He’s a truck driver and is often on the road. He couldn’t take the time to carry the “ladder”. He put it in his living room, not knowing what to do with it. He just wanted to have one.

It was only in the evening that my heart could find peace.

3. Two Wall Paintings by Sol LeWitt

2013.4.14 Sun. Sunny

I planned to show two films for the children in the village every weekend. We called it "Weekend Cinema".

The First Grader and *Wallace and Gromit's World of Invention* were the two films shown today.

The children didn't show much interest in the films and many left after half an hour. They were different from my generation who would be interested in any moving images. Perhaps as they are more exposed to the outside world, they are not that curious anymore.

The demolition programme due to the road extension is now confirmed. The road will be extended twenty meters to the south and twenty meters to the north. The library is in the demolition area. So was the main house of my family.

During the past two days, the villagers have all panicked a bit and talked about it. My parents couldn't even sleep at the night, worrying where they should go after the demolition. Wang Gaoqi's grocery store will also be torn down. He is worried. The road extension programme will destroy the place where he has made a living. Goudan just built a two-story building for his two sons that they could live in when they get married. But now it will be demolished even before his sons spend a day in it.

My uncle set up a temporary shed in his courtyard, saying it would help him get more compensation.

People living alongside the road all started some construction work. They either decorated their houses or set up some temporary structures.

I don't approve of this, and even despise it. But this is the reality and they are my relatives.

I'm concerned that the demolition programme may put an end to my project. But I'm powerless to compete with the reality. I can only let it be.

I felt depressed and walked the dog to the river bank, sitting there for a while. Things didn't go as I wished. I'm not satisfied with Zhong Ming's working performance, the librarian and the progress of the project.

I have become less and less confident about the library. Grown-ups don't read and kids don't show much interest in books either. I used to say that the library is an open window. Now the window is there but no one looks through it.

2013. 4. 15 Mon. Sunny

Today I was in much better mood.

In the face of new circumstances, I became a bit impatient. I should be more tolerant to new situations and make adjustments accordingly.

2013. 4. 17 Wed. Sunny

People started to set up temporary structures in their courtyards and redecorate their rooms – new ceilings, composite floor and wallpapers. It seems absurd as they set up these for the sake of demolition. They just want to ask for more compensation.

Originally my father didn't approve of this. But when everyone else was doing it, he changed his mind. He spoke to me about setting up a temporary shed. I didn't agree. I said: it made us look like losers.

Hong Wei's mother previously agreed that I could set up Richard Long's *Circle of Sticks* in her courtyard. But this morning Hong Wei's elder brother hired workers to set up a shed in the courtyard. Hong Wei's mother told me, quite embarrassedly, "He wanted to do it and I couldn't help it."

When people were all in a hectic state, I told myself I should not allow myself to be disturbed by it. I needed to find my inner peace. My art was nothing more than a small game and it had no power at all in the face of profit.

I paid a visit to Lu Daode at his home when he was drawing pictures of deities. He is a peasant in his seventies. Different from other peasants, he can paint. In rural villages, many people believe in the existence of deities and devils. So he got a lot of orders for pictures of deities. The price for each picture is low. A 1x1m painting usually features 4 or 5 characters and he charges about 200 yuan. When he was young he studied meticulous brush techniques. During the Cultural Revolution, as his art could not serve politics he was criticized as a "feudalist, capitalist and revisionist" and sent back home to engage in farming. He also took the role as carpenter and teacher for a while, and drew some decorative patterns for historical buildings.

I showed him two of Sol LeWitt's wall paintings (Wall Painting No. 480 and No. 256) and invited him to join me to reproduce these two paintings in the village. He turned me down, affirmatively. He gave me three reasons: 1. He is repelled by western art as he can't see any meaning in such art; 2. He has a lot of orders for deity pictures at

hand so he doesn't have time; and 3. He is afraid of heights and too old to complete such a big work.

I said: "You would be paid for the work. Van Abbemuseum has a budget for the production. Also, I'd take care of the higher part and you just need to take care of the lower part."

Then he started to discuss the procedure and methods with me, and said that the work was just a piece of cake for him. I double checked if he was willing to produce the two paintings and he said "no problem".

2013. 4. 20 Sat. Overcast - Rainy

Together Lu Daode and I completed one of the two Sol LeWitt wall paintings, *Untitled: Wall Painting No. 256*.

We reproduced it on one of my neighbors, Er Pan's, backyard wall. There are two stark persimmon trees along the wall and a cluster of winter jasmine which gives the wall some yellowish decoration.

Lu Daode suggested using a spray gun but I insisted that the original work was painted by brush and a brush would give the work a stronger sense of painting. We used oil paints to produce the wall painting. We didn't put much thought into the color as we followed Sol LeWitt's instructions. Lu Daode was quite energetic. He had a glass of liquor during lunch and resumed work without taking a break.

It rained a bit at dusk. We continued to paint. It started to rain heavily right after we finished. I signed both of our names at the bottom right corner of the painting.

People passing by would stop to watch us. Most of them would say it was beautiful but they couldn't understand it. They asked me what we were painting. I told them it was an abstract painting and explained to them the meaning of abstract painting.

They still couldn't understand. So I told them "It is whatever you think it is". One of the fellow villagers said "it looks like two colorful diamonds".

Lu Daode was very happy. He drank a lot during dinner and spoke a lot. It seemed he enjoyed the process of painting and the collaboration between us.

2013. 4. 22 Mon. Overcast - Sunny

Lu Daode and I completed the second wall painting by Sol LeWitt, *Untitled: Wall Painting No. 480*.

This one was painted on the back wall of the third house to the west of the library. The house was surrounded by two two-story buildings and there was a telegraph pole in front of it and two big speakers on top of it.

Sol LeWitt wrote in his instructions that 4 angles and 4 midpoints needed to be located and white chalk should be used to draw 10 lines whose angles and length were up to the workers. As this work is presented in the open air, chalk couldn't stand the wind and rain. So we applied white paints onto the wall, twice, and then used tape to "draw" 10 lines of varying lengths from the 4 angles and 4 midpoints. I said the length of the lines could be decided randomly but Lu Daode insisted on following the length and angles of the original work. It slowed down our process. Then we used black oil paints to paint the whole wall. Finally, we ripped the tape off so that white lines of different lengths appeared. The work was completed. Many came to see the wall painting. They didn't understand it. Nor did they think it was good-looking. Uncle Gangdan stared at it for a long time. When I told him this was a work by an American artist, he said he got it. "The lines indicated directions of missiles. America is the world's policeman and uses missiles to invade other countries. That's what the artist wants to express." He asked me "do I understand it correctly?" I told him "Everyone has his own way of interpretation and you've made a good point."

Lu Daode enjoyed the process and was very dedicated. He seemed to like the wall paintings produced by us very much. I could feel his happiness. In the village, he doesn't have a good reputation and people don't pay him respect for his painting skills. Apparently, he also looks down upon his fellow villagers. He is an arrogant man and always holds his head up.

2013.4.27 Sat. Sunny

It's getting warmer and summer is approaching. I took off my dark blue coat and put on my white shirt. I hope my mood is as bright as the weather.

The heavy rain is quickly absorbed by the dry soil or evaporates under the sizzling sun. The air is brimming with dust and soil.

Sophora flowers have bloomed. At the dining table we now have sophora flowers as seasonal spices.

Houses that would be demolished were measured and registered. The village went back to normal.

Wang Gaoqi, the store owner, spent another week lying in bed. According to his wife, he couldn't stand the demolition for they would lose their store and home. And they didn't have the money to build new house. He spent two days crying and remained

in bed afterwards. He is always like this. When there's a problem he would go to bed. But sleep won't solve anything. I visited him in the morning and couldn't help him.

Lao Na said that he started to feel the project was a bit boring. He didn't feel the energy he felt previously and there were no conflicts arising. I feel the project contains many conflicts. A very infectious documentary could be made out of it, but the story would take the place of the art per se. Like myself, these works won't change anything in the village. They are just some kind of decoration and a topic of conversation for the villagers. They will get accustomed to these things and gradually ignore their presence.

Every day is a good day! No matter what I do or don't do, it's a nice day.

2013. 4. 28 Sun. Sunny

I interviewed Lu Daode in the afternoon, and the topic centered on his liking for painting. He believes that if he were given another chance, his painting career would have turned out differently. He had strived for opportunities to paint but his talent was suppressed by reality. Now that he was getting old, he lost that ambition. He didn't keep any of his work. In a way, it showed certain resolution. The meaning of life didn't lie in how many works you keep. What mattered was if you felt self-fulfillment. Whether or not one gains achievement should not affect one's happiness or the value/meaning of his life.

He feels it's a pity that our collaboration came to an end too soon.

4. Picnic Party

2013.5.1 Tue. Sunny

Time flies and it's May already. Catkins are dancing in the air, like snowflakes. When a truck passes by, dust flies all over. It hasn't rained for so long.

At *Weekend Cinema*, cartoon movies seem more attractive. Children will stay and watch them through.

2013.5.6 Mon. Overcast

It was either due to the camera or the fact that I drank a bottle of beer, after dinner I asked my father if he blamed himself because he was strongly against me going to college and couldn't afford my tuition fees. He was angry, and sad. I can never let this go, which leads to a huge gap between my father and I.

I blamed myself for making him sad. I should understand his difficulties and shouldn't have brought that back up again. I used the words that made me comfortable but him sad, which makes me a selfish person.

In the morning, I apologized to him. He cried. He said, while choking with sobs, "I always think that you look down upon this useless father."

Now I'm back in the village and I realize that all of my weakness and badness is rooted here. I see clearly the dirt that is all over me. I don't want to cover it anymore. I want to get rid of it. For many years, I've always endeavored to maintain my so-called poor self-esteem. It is such self-esteem that pushes me to want to leave the place as far as possible. Now that I realize this, I start to learn to let go.

I think I'm good and strong enough. Only when I came back to the village, to my home, I realize I have so many problems. I'm not good at handling things and people. I'm narrow-minded and selfish. I want me to be open-minded and tolerant, but I am not yet.

The old saying occurred to me: Art is a broken net with holes all over. Is life also a broken net? You keep mending it all the time and never have a break.

2013.5.8 Wed. Sunny

Jay Brown, an American guy, was the first foreigner ever to come to Qiuzhuang. People looked at him, his curly hair and blue eyes, as if they were looking at a chimpanzee.

Jay Brown is working in “Lijiang Studio” in Yunnan Province. He rented a yard in a village, inviting artists from all over the world to participate in a residence programme here. For the past ten years, they have presented many interesting art projects.

Last year when I was in New York, we talked about Qiuzhuang Project. He questioned that it seemed I initiated the project for the sake of the museum rather than for myself and the village. So he agreed immediately to come upon my invitation.

2013.5.10 Fri. Sunny

A few days ago, my uncle intended to set up a shed in the empty area in front of his house. My mother saw that and said “no matter what you set up this piece of land belongs to us”. My uncle was very unhappy. He wanted my father to let him have this piece of land when the official measuring was done.

He said he would do whatever it took to get the land from my father.

I resorted to teacher Wei to mediate, trying to convince my father to let my uncle have it. But my father didn’t agree. Uncle insisted that the land possessed by my father belonged to their ancestors, meaning he should also have a share. Neither party was willing to make a compromise. They both have heart disease. I feared that they both would suffer from the dispute if they continued to focus on it.

The night before the official measuring, I went to visit my uncle: “Could you please, for my sake, give up that piece of land? I have many friends living in my house, and some are foreigners. Our family conflict would affect my career. If you could quit quarreling with my father, that would mean a lot to me.”

Finally my uncle agreed. He promised he would not compete with my father again for the ownership of the land.

The next day went smoothly. No conflict happened.

We tend to stand by the side of “justice”. But this may evoke evil. We tend to divide things into two kinds: “just” and “unjust”. But we seldom take into consideration that the boundary line between “justice” and “injustice” is ambiguous. Those who are just can also be evil; while those who are unjust can also be kind. I believe there’s a warm corner in every one of us no matter how “evil” he is considered.

2013.5.11 Sun. Sunny

Lao Na, Jay Brown, Zhong Ming and I spent the day hiking and Songlou Town was our destination. It's very hot today. We walked along the Fuxin River and got to Wanggangji Dam by noon. We had lunch at a rural inn, having some donkey meat and beer. Then we took a two-hour break in the forest beside the river and kept walking. There's no road to go further so we took a detour to Fenghuang Road, the provincial road. We arrived at Songlou Town by dusk. We wandered around the town for a while, had some ice cream and water, and then took a van to go back to Qiuzhuang. We were all exhausted. When people heard we walked all the way to Songlou, they all called us "nuts".

2013.5.14 Tue. Sunny

Ellen Zweig will come to Qiuzhuang this weekend. I intend to let her have a picnic party with the children here in the afternoon. Ellen is a New York-based video artist and poet. I don't intend to introduce her art to the children but just want her to have some communication with them. I put up a poster in the village. Soon many children came to the library to sign up for the party. Now I have 26 children signed up. So I wrote on the poster: Fully Booked.

2013.5.15 Wed. Sunny

Zhong Ming seldom talks lately. He seems to have closed the door of communication with others. When a problem occurs, he doesn't think about how to solve it but just to tries to delay it until I talk to him. I'm not sure if it's the right decision to hire him as my assistant for I don't think he is competent. It's in his nature that he is not good at expressing himself and unwilling to communicate with people. It's hard to change that.

He cannot complete his tasks alone in most cases. He always puts himself in a position of needing to be taken care of instead of actively taking care of other people and things.

The circular lamps I bought from Zhongshan city, Guangdong Province, arrived at Feng County via Deppon Express. I took them back home and found many were

broken when I opened the boxes. The seller didn't take any protective measures. Damage was inevitable. I called the factory, and wrote them an email, showing them the pictures of broken lamps. No reply was received. I hate the way Chinese companies deal with customers. But I can do nothing about it.

At the dinner table, my second brother-in-law asked Jay Brown a series of questions. And most of the questions were like: why does the States often invade other countries, why do they want to play the role as world police, why do they carry out hegemonism, and why do they support Japan and Korea to play against China, etc. Jay Brown was a bit nervous, not knowing how to speak with him. He asked, timidly, "Did you ever serve in the army?" He felt the hatred my brother-in-law held against the U.S and it almost made communication impossible. I diverted the topic so that our discussions started to center on issues such as American peasants' lives and if there is a family planning policy in the States. Jay Brown was very patient to explain his views of culture, arts and China. We drank a lot of liquor and Jay Brown was drunk.

2013.5.17 Fri. Drizzle

Ellen and her assistant Hangya came yesterday afternoon. My father was very happy and he told Ellen he was proud of me. That was the first time I heard him say that. I often feel he looks down upon me as he never praises or says anything positive about me. I took Ellen to visit the Fuxin River, the village hospital and my elementary school (which is now a factory that collects bottle caps). Ellen sat among the villagers beside the grocery store and they all felt a bit unnatural, not knowing what to say. Ellen also felt a bit shy, not knowing what to do. She is not cunning at all, which is what I like about her. Tomorrow we'll have the "Picnic with Ellen Zweig". There will be drizzle according to the weather forecast. If it rains, we'll have the picnic inside the library.

2013.5.18 Sat. Overcast

We had the picnic in the poplar forest to the north side of the village. Ellen made sandwiches, salads with potatoes, lettuce and fruits. We also prepared cola, orange juice and beer.

28 children signed up but we had 41 on site. Some came with their parents. As the picnic carried on, more children joined. So did some adults. Apparently, we lost control of the number of guests. But we had prepared enough food. So not only the children but also the adults enjoyed the picnic.

When we were done eating, the children started to recite Tang poems and sang for Ellen. Ellen asked what they wanted to do when they grew up. Some said they wanted to become doctors, some teachers and some pilots. Ellen asked: "Why doesn't anyone want to become an artist?" One kid said he wanted to change his wish and wanted to become an artist. "Why?" Ellen asked. He said: "Because artists can go abroad."

The children were a bit shy and sat there tight, waiting for food to be delivered to them. They didn't like to ask questions. They liked to be passive and liked to recite poems with other kids. When asked a question, they tended to use the most succinct sentence to answer it.

This was the first picnic that the kids in our village had had. They were happy and curious. The next day a girl, Li Juan(from my fourth uncle's family) came, all dressed up, and asked to participate in the picnic. When we told her the picnic was only a one-day event, she left, very disappointed.

I felt grateful to Ellen for giving such a beautiful memory to the kids here. I also wanted to thank the "team": teacher Wei Yongming, Zhang Hangya, my second elder sister, sister Si Ni, Zhong Ming and Na Yingyu.

5. A “Pop” Mao and Performance Art in Grocery Store

2013.5.19 Sun. Sunny

I contacted a printing factory to print Mao’s portraits created by Andy Warhol in 1972. The factory is located in the west side of the county. The man who received me was called Jiang Bo. He didn’t seem passionate, but seemed capable and trust-worthy.

After looking at the file I made, he said to avoid unnecessary troubles he didn’t want to put the printing factory’s name at the bottom of the poster. Hence, we changed “Run Se Printing Co.” into “Run Cai Printing Co.” He thought it sounded nice. I didn’t bargain the price with him as he had a very trust-worthy face. I asked them to give us notice before printing so that we could film the printing process.

2013.5.20 Mon. Sunny

I chose 6 performance videos by Ulay and Abramovic from Van Abbemuseum’s collection and showed them at Wang Gaoqi’s grocery store. They six videos are: *Imponderabilia*, *AAA-AAA*, *Light/Dark*, *Rest Energy*, *The Lovers – The Great Wall Walk I* and *The Lovers – The Great Wall Walk II*.

I brought the TV screen and DVD player of my own to the store, putting them on the refrigerator beside the counter so that they could face the customers. Given that the videos needed to be played on a daily basis and would consume electricity, I offered Wang Gaoqi 500 yuan as remuneration. I told him: “You run the videos every day when you open the store and turn them off at 8pm when there’s no customer. Whether there’re people watching it or not, the videos have to be played all the time.”

Like their reaction towards other works, most people said they couldn’t get it. They are accustomed to story-telling and hence not used to performance without plot. But such performance still evoked discussions even though they claimed that they didn’t get it. Wang Gaoqi said he liked *The Lovers – The Great Wall Walk* the most, and was always thinking about how to explain this video to others. These videos would be shown in the grocery store for three months and people would have enough time to absorb them. Originally I feared that nudity in *Imponderabilia* would make it hard for villagers to accept. But it seemed they only thought they couldn’t understand their behavior and didn’t think nudity a problem.

2013.5.22 Wed. Sunny

At the store, an elder sister-in-law thought the nudity in *Imponderabilia* was obscene. She ran off, covering her eyes with her hands. Wang Gaoqi seemed concerned too. If *Imponderabilia* was on display when a female customer came, he turned off the TV and turned it back on when she left. When I asked him if he thought the nudity in the video a problem, he said no and he could understand and accept it. But that's probably because he took the money I gave him.

We put up posters of Ulay and Abramovic's performance art around the village. We designed it in the same manner as other commercial posters seen in the village so that they could fit in. This morning, Zhang Shijie came to tell us there was an error on our poster. We wrote "Ulay walked toward the east from Shanhai Pass of the Great Wall" by mistake. It should be "Ulay walked toward the east from Jiayu Pass of the Great Wall". So we changed "Shanhai Pass" to "Jiayu Pass" by pen on each poster.

2013.5.23 Thu. Sunny

The printer printed Andy Warhol's portraits of Mao Zedong without notifying us at all. Jiang Bo stressed that his boss was very nervous because he knew the Chinese government was not in favor of contemporary art. He feared it would cause him trouble. The paper they used for the posters was far thinner than the type he had shown me. But the color was fine.

It seems you really cannot trust anyone here. Lies are everywhere and there's no way to prevent it. I now understood why my parents kept telling me not to trust people so easily. They had their lessons.

A friend saw the three portraits of Mao Zedong. He said the three colors represented the three periods of Mao's life: red symbolized the revolutionary period when he was full of passion to initiate a revolution, to drive away the Kuomintang and to establish new China; yellow corresponded to the period after the establishment of new China as he started to seem muddleheaded and prosecute rightists; blue referred to the Cultural Revolution period. During this period he was so dark that he pushed China into a horrible abyss.

2013.5.27 Mon. Overcast

It rained all day yesterday, heavily. Roads were flooded with water. So were the ditches. Trash floated on the water.

Two unexpected things happened: 1. Fan Meng, a young guy in the village, was decorating his house and he made a wood structure just like Sol LeWitt's "Untitled, Wall Structure" as a shelf on the wall; and 2. Uncle Li Jintai invited me to reproduce another of Sol LeWitt's "Untitled, Wall Painting No. 480" in his new house and he wanted to choose the base color. In the meantime, I convinced him to let me put Carl Andre's 25 pieces of steel plates in his new house.

2013.6.7 Fri. Overcast

My cousin's son, Titi, went missing in Guangzhou. And later his body was found floating on the river. It was said he accidentally fell into the water and was drowned. Today his ashes were brought back to be buried at home. My cousin was so heartbroken that she cried her heart out.

Zhong Ming is not capable of the work and highly inefficient. I doubted my choice once again. He might not be the right person at all. What could I do? I have to do what I have to do. I must give him specific assignment and demand him to finish it within given time.

Three of Andy Warhol's portraits of *Mao Zedong* were hung onto the back wall of Li Changbiao's house this afternoon. Each was about 2m high and all three were produced by Yang Gaoju.

Yang Gaoju used to draw many portraits of Mao. He adored Mao, considering him not only a great strategist but also a great calligrapher and poet. To him, Mao was one of a kind.

The 2m-high posters were of low resolution, especially the blue one. I was not satisfied. But that's the reality. That's what a county production company can achieve and I have to accept that.

The three portraits were fixed onto the back wall of Li Changbiao's house. It seemed they belonged here because blurred traces of slogans during Mao's period could still be seen on the somewhat shabby brick wall.

The three portraits of Mao were face to face with Li Changshun's house, his plank workshop and the black Tibetan Mastiff who barked all the time. Li Changshun was happy. He believed Mao's portraits would bring his workshop and his family peace and good luck.

Many came to take a look. They all disliked the blue one for it was bad looking and was considered disrespectful to chairman Mao. Many passers-by stopped and took pictures.

In the evening, Yang Gaoju wrote about my project on his own blog page. Obviously, he started to like the project.

My father didn't approve of making the three portraits of Mao. He knew he couldn't stop me, so he stood beside, watching us installing the portraits and smoking one cigarette after another.

2013.6.9 Sun. Sunny

The distribution of Mao's portraits turned out to be a huge task. During my working hours, most families had no one at home. So we had to give them the portraits at dusk. We worked till evening but the result was not very fruitful. Most Christians didn't want the portraits. Some didn't seem to mind. Some thought it a sign of auspiciousness. Some thought the portraits might rise in value so they wanted to have them. Certainly, there were also people who accepted them out of their support of my work.

People constantly asked me the meaning of the three colors. Lao Na said: The red chairman Mao would bless you in good health; the yellow one, good fortune; and the blue one, good luck. In this way, people got to understand and accept them.

2013.6.17 Mon. Sunny

I haven't written much these days as I feel quite lazy.

It's extremely hot. Just like in those chilly winter days, you just want to do nothing. Lao Na left. I have to refill myself with passion for work otherwise the work will seem tedious.

I met a guy wearing worn military uniform and an army cap with a badge featuring Mao Zedong. So I talked to him. It turned out he was my father's elementary school classmate, Sun Guangfa. He said he collected a lot of badges and posters of Mao Zedong. I offered to give him two sets of Andy Warhol's portraits of Mao and he was very happy.

During the Cultural Revolution, he was a red guard, a rebel. He started to wear a military uniform and a badge featuring Mao Zedong since then. He passionately

worships Mao, saying that Mao was a world-class great figure who threw over the three “Mountains” and built the new China. He even thought the Cultural Revolution was one of his magnificent feats.

He spoke passionately and revealed his grudge towards the current leaders when talking about Mao. Despite my disagreement with him, I listened to him and spoke with him in a reserved way.

Today there were two accidents on the roads, one old man and two young men who were driving motorcycles got killed.

Ang Lee’s *Life of Pi* and Miyazaki Hayao’s *Grave of Fireflies* were shown at the “Weekend Cinema”. After the screening, there was no discussion. People just packed up and left.

Zhang Shiguo, my elementary school classmate, brought his daughter, Zhang Qianqian, here to learn drawing. She seems silent and stubborn, and the lines she drew were steady. I feel she has potential. She will come to the library to learn drawing every weekend.

2013.6.20 Thu. Sunny

It is stiflingly hot. Yesterday I visited several factories to send the portraits of Mao. My clothes were almost soaking.

I had a sunstroke and felt very uncomfortable. At dusk I walked the dog to the riverside and picked a bunch of wild flowers and inserted them in a cola bottle on the library table.

When I feel uncomfortable I start to think about the relation between body and spirit. I always stress the importance of spiritual satisfaction and the quality of spiritual life, but I often ignore the other life of mine – my body. I eat and drink greedily and work like a workaholic, ignoring the health of my body. Hence, I’m deprived of the pleasure and comfort brought about by a healthy body. Spirit and body are equal and integrated, and we should not treat them differently. I decide from now on I will treat my body with all the simple but healthy food, exercise constantly and enjoy my body.

Zhong Ming asked if I was satisfied with his work lately. I told him I trusted him more and more.

I plan to grow some corn in front of the library and the fence will be decorated by Daniel Buren's stripes. Previously I intended to show the stripes in Wang Hedong's house. But that building was about to be demolished and he no longer lives there. I'm afraid if I show the stripes on those walls they will merely be some decoration and wouldn't have anything to do with people's lives. If so, the inner strength of the work would be gone.

My father tried to stop me when he heard I wanted to spend money hiring people to make an aluminium-alloy fence because he thought that would be a waste of money.

Fan Jingsi and Wang Gaoli started to make Dan Flavin's 55 ring lamps. They worried that the installation would be destroyed if displayed in open air. They planned to make it a mobile installation so that we could show it outdoors in the day and take it back inside in the evening. This probably is a good idea. It adds some workload as we'll need to take it out every day but we won't need to worry about rain.

Yang Gaoju started to make John Kormeling's light installation, "HI HA". We now decided to use iron characters and LEDs to make the installation.

I started to prepare for my speech in Macau on July 25. I will introduce the Qiuzhuang Project at a round table meeting.

2013.6.25 Tue. Sunny

My stay in Macau was so short that I didn't even have the time to meet my friends. The round table meeting was held at the Venetian Hotel and was conducted in English. I spoke in English and listened to others who spoke in English. Quite a challenge! My English pronunciation was terrible. I felt it sounded terrible. During the break, many said they liked the Qiuzhuang Project.

I took my camera with me but I didn't take a single picture while walking in the gorgeous Venetian Hotel.

2013.6.26 Wed. Sunny

I took a coach from Zhuhai to Guangzhou this morning and stayed in the living room of the Libreria Borges Institute for Contemporary Art.

I had dinner with Chen Tong and he said a lot about how he viewed the project. He didn't quite understand the project. It's not because he didn't say nice things about it, but I didn't feel he gave me any inspiration and insight. He's a scholar, a painter. I will take a flight back to Xuzhou tomorrow morning to carry on with my project.

When talking with Xu Tan about presenting the Qiuzhuang Project at a museum space, we both felt if it was presented in the form of a series of installations, it would drag the project behind. What's the point of reproducing an art event that happened in real life in museum space? Is it a compromise to the museum? A museum is supposed to be responsible for the public, then how about artists? I think artists can only be responsible for themselves. To use incidents that happened in real life as materials to be combined with a museum space, what's the potential for such reproduction? The only feasible way should be to use the museum as new material to imbue the work with new possibilities. Simple reproduction will not work. All things are materials and will lead to new possibilities.

2013.6.28 Fri. Sunny

I slept for three hours and missed the airport shuttle bus departing at 6:20am. So I had to take a taxi. The flight was delayed for two hours and stopped at Lianyungang for half an hour before it finally arrived in Xuzhou. Then I took a van, a bus and a taxi to go home. When I finally arrived it was already 6:30pm.

I met quite a few friends and heard many different views. Usually I would feel less confident in myself. Compared to when I was in the village, I feel less passionate and confident in the project I'm working on. I know I still have the vanity, desires and ambition for success. These things make me unhappy and dissatisfied. As long as there's dissatisfaction and vanity, true happiness cannot be gained.

Now I'm back in the village and it is dry and noisy as usual. It's just like my mind where no peach can be found.

When the project comes to a halt, I want to find somewhere quiet to spend some time.

6. HI HA HI HA.....

2013.7.4 Thu. Rainy

It finally rained. After days of heavy rain and thundershowers, the roads in the village once again turned into rivers.

When Zhong Ming was filming the splashes made by the passing cars, the camera was soaking. We dismantled it and put it beside the electric fan to be blown for a whole night. Then we reassembled it and continue to use it.

My parents grew some corn in front of the library and are waiting for it to sprout. It was so hot that I bought two stand fans for the library.

2013.7.6 Sat. Sunny

I sat on the big table in the library. In the middle of it there was a cola bottle whose neck was cut off. A bunch of withered *setaria viridis* were inserted in it. A group of children were browsing the books, Zhang Qianqian was drawing and my fourth uncle was reading.

I observed the children while they browsed the books. Though they might not understand the contents they gave out a sense of innocent satisfaction. Fourth uncle was reading Tehching Hsieh's *Out of Now*. He didn't understand Hsieh's performance art but he looked at every picture carefully. Zhang Qianqian was drawing Andy Warhol's "high steel". The lines she drew were very steady and powerful.

The library is important to the village. People need it to be there.

The corn in front of the library sprouted and grew 5 centimeters overnight.

Yesterday Yang Gaoju and Li Sen came to install John Kormeling's "HI HA." Actually this is the first piece I started to work on, but due to technical and material reasons the installation just started. Yang Gaoju is engaged in a light production business but he never saw the lamps used in the original work. In the end, I let him use alternative materials to produce the lamps. We chose iron characters. We sprayed paint on them and installed colorful LEDs inside the characters. It looks just like the original work upon first sight though it's a "copycat".

"HI HA" was installed on the back wall of Wang Xueyi's house, opposite the grocery store and facing the main road. It imbues the store with a sense of joy.

Yang Gaoju said he could only accept the fees for the materials. I didn't agree and insisted on giving him 4,000 yuan.

I saw an article introducing the Qiuzhuang Project online yesterday. It was entitled "A Copycat of Van Abbemuseum". It's true. When the collection from Van Abbemuseum was reproduced in the village, a copycat "Van Abbemuseum" came into being. What's wrong with that? People enjoy the delight brought about by these works.

The money spent on production was not much. Firstly, the materials I chose were not expensive. And secondly many friends and relatives gave a helping hand and didn't charge much. It seemed most of the money was spent on things other than the works. And it was those things that constituted the project.

Yang Gaoju and Li Sen continued to install John Kormeling's light installation this afternoon. When it was getting dark, I turned on the light. It was beautiful. "HI HA HI HA" ... It flickered rapidly. But I never saw how the original work flickered. The replica looks quite like the original one. Certainly, if you take a closer look, you'd see it is cheaply and roughly made. The iron characters installed onto the walls look like they cannot be detached from the building.

2013.7.7 Sun. Sunny

This afternoon I visited several families living nearby the library and gave them the portraits of Mao. I felt that many people didn't like them. Some said they had too many drawings at home and no room for the portraits. Some said they had a picture of Jesus at home and couldn't have the portraits of Mao. Some just refused or hesitated to accept. And some who were willing to show the portraits in their home didn't truly like them but were too polite to turn me down.

The hesitation and refusal affected my passion. But it was because of this I could see the problems. It was about the conflicts and estrangement between people's aesthetic awareness and Andy Warhol's work, not between them and me. I needed to ask them with a peaceful mind whether or not they wanted to accept the portraits and respect their wishes. A subtle mindset and seemingly peaceful conflicts are exactly the power of this project.

John Kormeling's "HI HA" started to flicker at night. People passing by stop to look at it. They all say it is nice-looking but beyond their comprehension.

This piece didn't evoke any conflicts. Things that more people like tend to be things that are deprived of stories and smooth.

2013.7.10 Wed. Sunny

It was so hot that I didn't want to do anything. A day just passed, quickly.

Wang Gaoqi, the owner of the grocery store, was in bad mood, and lay in bed for over a week. I visited him. He said he had diarrhea. He didn't have the energy to take care of Ulay and Abramovic's videos and the screening came to a halt for a week. I understand how a man who has lost his courage and faith would have no passion for anything. He's always like this. When he encounters any problem he chooses to lie in bed, sometimes for a week and sometimes for a month. The core of his problems is he doesn't have a son. He only has two daughters. In rural villages, people still prefer to have boys. They can bear disasters, poverty and ignorance, but can't bear the absence of a son. Such a mindset could kill or torture you to want to kill yourself.

The two persimmon trees in front of one of Sol LeWitt's wall paintings grew so well that they block the view of a large part of the painting.

Wang Xueyi's wife built a herringbone-shaped shelf in front of "HI HA". It won't take long before the string beans crawl up the shelf and cover most of the installation. Here when art is in conflict with people's practical interests, art needs to be compromised. Only in this way can they co-exist. Otherwise art will have no room to survive.

In the afternoon, I gave Lu Daode Andy Warhol's portrait of Mao Zedong. He took it, saying that he could accept it as Andy Warhol didn't distort the image of Mao. He said he would replace the current Mao portrait hung in the middle of his living room with Andy Warhol's version.

2013.7.17 Wed. Sunny

I've been away from Shanghai for over six months. I sense danger – the danger that I might be isolated from modern culture. I need to be alert and I need to study hard. When the connection between the city and me is cut off, the possibilities for my art to communicate with the city will also be deprived.

2013.7.21 Sun. Rainy

I'm grateful for those who have different academic opinions with me, those who argue with me and those who "attack" me, academically. Because of them, I can maintain a clear mind and independent spirit, and I can grow stronger. It reminds of the boy and the Bengal tiger in Ang Lee's *Life of Pi*. The boy survived because of the looming danger. I would not be able to achieve much in art without those who disagree with or are against me.

2013.7.23 Tue. Rainy

At noon I invited several painting pals to visit teacher Wei Yishan in town together with me. We bought some fruit, milk and eggs. We knocked at his door but no one answered. I made a phone call and was told teacher Wei would stay at his eldest daughter's for a while. So we came back.

Zhong Ming said he is bored lately and doesn't have much to. I think this is the problem. Without assignments from me, he just doesn't have the energy to work. After all, he'll need to learn to get along with himself and find work for himself. He will need to solve his own problems.

The roads in the village are still rivers due to the heavy rain days ago. The string beans planted in front of John Kormeling's "HI HA" have now covered a large part of the installation. So have the trees in front of So LeWitt's wall painting. The view is almost totally blocked. The corn and wild grass in front of the library also grew very well, adding pieces of green to the view.

It is so hot. Even though you don't move at all, you still sweat all over. Once again I feel I don't like this place and want to find a new place for my parents to live, somewhere that is neither too hot nor too cold, somewhere that is cleaner.

7. 55 Ring Lights

2013.8.9 Fri. Sunny

I left Shanghai and came back to Qiuzhuang. It's still very hot. Wherever you are, your clothes are soaking.

The thunder and lightning last night awakened me from my dream.

Zhong Ming designed a cover for Dan Flavin's ring lights in red. My mom made it by using her sewing machine. It looked a lot like a red flag. And when it's folded, it's just like a piece of curtain. I don't think the color matches the work as the lights are in white, the cover would be better in some color that is also light and elegant. The red may disturb the quietness of the work. If I still don't think it's good when it's installed, I'll need to remake a cover.

2013.8.10 Sat. Sunny

This morning my father chopped down the corn and broomcorn that grew in front of our house and blocked the view of the installation.

My mom made the red cover and my father installed it onto the wall. It was so hot and everybody sweated heavily.

When switched on, the 55 ring lights all turned on. We all thought it was beautiful. My father was proud of himself and filled with a sense of fulfillment. Soaked as he was, he energetically adjusted the details of the installation and the positions of the lights, attaching the wires along the walls.

Grandpa Zhao Lianqi, who is in his nineties and cannot walk without his walking-stick, also came to check it out. He said it was beautiful. He took a closer look for quite a while and said: "Men are so capable!"

Wang Qianjin took many pictures with his small camera.

Xueyi's wife saw the installation and commented: "The one at your house looks better." "HI HA" was installed on the wall of her house and blocked by the string beans. So it looked a bit dull. I told her: "Don't worry. When the shelf for string beans is removed in autumn, the installation at your house will look nice again." In the evening, the 55 ring lights looked almost dazzling, attracting many people's attention.

The red cover was just like a red theater curtain, making it like a theater.

I looked at the installation which was taken out of the art museum and placed in a space full of mud, noise, crops and peasants who are shirtless. It was imbued with a new verve. It fit perfectly into the surrounding environment and became a new spectacle.

In the evening the installation went through its first stormy night.

2013.8.11 Sun. Sunny

Yesterday afternoon, Canadian curator Jesse Birch came to Qiuzhuang together with Gu Ling, Luigi and Chao Jiaying. Jesse wanted to write a review of "Qiuzhuang Project" for *Yishu - Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, so he came all the way from Vancouver to Qiuzhuang. He said without first-hand experience it would be hard for him to write the review. Though he could still write something without actually coming here in person, that would be very different.

I invited Gu Ling to come from Shanghai to translate for him.

It was sizzling outside. He looked at the works very carefully, taking notes and asking me questions constantly. He visited Lu Daode, Wang Gaoqi, Wei Yiming, Fan Jingsi and my parents.

In the evening I invited them to go to the county and we had dinner at the dog meat restaurant owned by my cousin. I also invited Yang Gaoju to come as a guest.

2013.8.12 Mon. Sunny

It's sizzling.

Jesse's stay at Qiuzhuang was accompanied by sizzling temperature. My mom prepared a big lunch for us. I'm so thankful.

In the afternoon, I asked a brother of mine to send them to Xuzhou Railway Station. Hali found herself an inconspicuous corner and gave birth to six puppies.

2013.8.15 Tue. Sunny

Last night I dreamed of two collapses: an old house and a high rise. It was quite shocking. There was no casualty in the first accident. When the second collapse happened, a concert was taking place. Audience and players were devoured by the collapsing building instantly. I was pushed out of the building on my way to the restroom and escaped unharmed.

It's been nine days since the "start of autumn" on China's lunar calendar but it's still extremely hot. Usually in this time of the year it is a bit cold in the evening. This has been the hottest summer in the past eighty years and it is almost unbearable.

2013.8.16 Fri. Sunny

The corn planted in front of the library has grown taller.

Days ago I asked Lai Yuan and his mentor Meng to build the fence for me. But they were so busy on the construction site and didn't have the time. Today they finished their work on the site and started to make the fence for me.

They welded the prefabricated metal square tubes first to make them into a frame, and then attached a layer of white iron sheet onto it. They fixed the legs of the fence into the ground by using cement and then it was done.

When filming the scenes of welding, the flying sparks scorched the lens. Luckily he used a wide-angle lens. So we changed it out and continued to film.

As I paid him for the production of Sol LeWitt's work, Meng Xianping insisted that this time they were just helping and only charged 600 yuan as material cost. So I bought them a carton of cigarettes.

2013.8.18 Fri. Sunny

My father thought we could not raise the six puppies Hali gave birth to and there was no one to take them. So he threw four away and kept two. I asked where he threw them. He said he threw them into the dried riverbed.

8. Sari and Munro

2013.8.20 Tue. Sunny

It's getting cooler. The long summer is finally about to come to an end. Probably because of the hot weather not many children came to the library. But it's also possible that because there haven't been any events for a while the library has lost its attraction to the children. It's easier to repeat but it's hard to innovate. What is a library? It's a window, a public space, a cinema and more. There are a lot of possibilities. It could be a restaurant, a theater, an art museum. Activities of the library should not be confined to the physical space of the library. They can happen everywhere.

2013.8.27 Tue. Sunny

Sari and Munro came all the way to Qiuzhuang from Australia. You can see softness and kindness in their eyes, which is rare nowadays among Chinese people. They came here to film a documentary and will stay for two weeks. My friend Wu Chenyun also came from Shanghai to help with the translation.

2013.8.30 Thu. Sunny

It's finally getting cooler. As wind blew in from the northwest, mom said it meant the hot weather was really gone.

Sari and Munro are a couple. They are very nice and lovely people. Wu Chenyun came to help with the translation and she was very professional. Sari spent the first two days walking and looking around with me, not shooting anything. She said she was not the type of person who planned everything in advance. She followed her feelings to decide what to do next. This morning she interviewed teacher Wei. I left when I saw them finish all the setting-up. I hoped that teacher Wei could feel more at ease and give more frank

opinions if I was not there. Sari was the one raising questions and taking care of the video-taping. Munro was in charge of sound recording. Probably because of their detail-oriented and careful attitudes, teacher Wei treated the interview very seriously. Everybody was satisfied with the interview. Teacher Wei said the Qiuzhuang Project was like a tree planted in the village. It would grow. Villagers could enjoy the cool air under the tree and in the meantime, the tree would also attract phoenixes from outside to come.

When outsiders come to the village to learn about the project, I see them as mirror through which I see myself. If you stay here for a long time, you'll tend to think and act in a certain fixed way. If that's the case, my work would turn into something that lacks creativity and is just simple repetition. Zhong Ming is just like this. He tends to think and act following a certain fixed way, which would easily make man like a piece of wood with no flexibility and wisdom.

I feel so tired and cannot stand it any longer.

Last night I dreamed that a stranger hugged me in the classroom and I absentmindedly followed him when he left. When I came back, for a moment I couldn't find my classroom and my desk. In the end when I found it, it was messy and dusty. My two elder sisters were very sad when they saw me because I had been missing for ten years. All of a sudden, I saw that stranger again. He looked like a monster. I pointed at him, screaming: "Get lost!" Why did I have such a dream? Was that because I subconsciously thought that to host Sari and Munro was a waste of time?

2013. 8. 31 Sat. Sunny

Sari interviewed Lu Daode in the morning. Apparently, he was not accustomed to such formal interview – the dazzling and sizzling light and the recording device extending to the top of his head. Before the interview, I told him there was no need to be nervous. He said he was afraid of nothing. But he who was always talkative was not able to express himself clearly during the interview. He even said several times "I don't know how to put it". This was unexpected. For a moment, I felt disappointed. The conversation was a "failure".

When asked about his view of Mao Zedong, he said "Chairman Mao was a great leader. He led people to overthrow the old society and establish the new China." Then he remained silent. During the break, I asked him: "Uncle Lu, you have some very different comments and thoughts about Mao Zedong. Why didn't you say that?" He said: "How could I badmouth our leader in front of foreigners?"

This afternoon they interviewed several kids. Sitting in front of the camera, the kids seemed nervous. It was an “unsuccessful” interview. For these kids, it already took them great courage to sit under the spotlight. It would be too demanding to ask them to express themselves freely in front of the camera. I had almost anticipated the result but I still wanted them to take this “unsuccessful” interview. I know this would become an important experience to them. No matter where they will be and what they will do in the future, this is going to be a helpful experience to them. Kids in the village all have such problems expressing themselves though they talk a lot when there’s no camera following them. They need more opportunities to practice how to express their true selves and true feelings.

Tomorrow they will interview Zhang Qianqian, a very private kid. I hope there will be a miracle and surprise.

In the afternoon many kids came to the library, turning the space into a kindergarten. After such a noisy day, I feel quite exhausted.

2013.9.1 Sun. Sunny

I stuck Zhang Qianqian’s paintings on the wall so that it could be used as the background for the interview. She draws well. It’s hard to imagine a ten-year-old could do that. To ease her nervousness, Munro and I left the room after he set up the recording equipment. Fewer people on site might help ease her nervousness.

Through all these interviews, I realized that I needed to communicate more with the kids and to encourage them to express themselves. It’s an opportunity for them to practice how to express. Usually we lack such opportunities in daily life. When we want to express ourselves, we don’t know how to do it. Most parents just want their children to behave. They don’t encourage children to develop their own ideas and to express themselves.

Sari asked Zhong Ming during lunch if she could film him reading his diary. I think maybe Sari also felt it’s hard to communicate with Zhong Ming. The inability to express to a large extent is because he doesn’t think much. Mental laziness is horrible.

2013.9.5 Thu. Overcast

Sari interviewed kids and villagers with poor educational backgrounds in the usual way. It didn't work out well. When taking formal interviews and facing foreigners and the dazzling spotlight, most villagers found it hard to express themselves. They are more accustomed to casual talks and don't like to discuss serious issues.

I told Zhong Ming what we filmed was time, not merely incidents. It should be the passing of time rather than dramatic conflicts that we capture. Only when we can feel the passing of time can we find a way to record it and present it to viewers. I'm not sure if he understood what I meant. In the evening we watched Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A Time to Live, A Time to Die* again. I was deeply touched by the "time" captured by Hou Hsiao-hsien.

We also watched a little bit of Jia Zhangke's *Platform*. Apparently, the way it was filmed was dull and too intentional. It's not like Hou Hsiao-hsien's film which was floating.

My father was happy about the arrival of Munro and Sari. He's curious about new things and is very hospitable. He teaches Munro some Chinese every day. When seeing Munro fiddling with chopsticks or speaking some strange Chinese, he is almost convulsed with laughter. Sometimes he even chokes on the cola he is drinking.

Munro and Sari are very polite and they say thank you and goodnight to my parents every night.

2013.9.6 Fri. Overcast

It hasn't rained for quite some days and dust is everywhere. Plants alongside the road are covered with a thick layer of dust. So is the corn in front of the library. There's no greenness to be seen. I'm a bit annoyed that the pictures and videos we take will seem ugly. But that's the reality, isn't it? Isn't this also landscape? We need to respect everything that exists and to observe and experience it.

Between yesterday afternoon and dusk today, I completed Daniel Buren's stripes. I reproduced them on the fence in front of the library.

Big trucks drove by from time to time, raising quite a lot of dust. I used a brush to draw black stripes against the white background. Both the black part and the white part were 8.7cm wide, which was the standard size for Daniel Buren's stripes. I repeatedly drew the simple vertical lines as if I was practicing Zen. I tried to focus

fully on the brush, but it was hard to do that because my mind easily wandered about.

When I finished, some people gathered in front of the library to watch.

Sari asked why I chose to reproduce Daniel's stripes. I said because he spent his whole life drawing stripes while everyone could draw such stripes. There was no fundamental difference between the stripes I drew and the ones he drew. I like this artist and his works can be easily reproduced. That's why I chose him. When the stripes were used on a fence, they turned into something with a practical function, and also added some visual contrast to the greyish environment.

2013.9.8 Sun. Rainy

Big sister (Yuan Jianyu) and her friend Lao Xue came to Qiuzhuang from Haimen to see the Qiuzhuang Project. It took them over ten hours by coach. Big sister suffered serious car sickness.

They didn't show much interest to the artworks alongside the road and didn't know how to read them. They know nothing about the western art in front of them. Neither do they know anything about the village. They didn't have many special feelings towards the integration of the works and the environment. To the villagers, it's a different case. The artworks entered into their living space like an intruder, changing the village environment. So they feel curious about the works and discuss them.

I hope I can "do my best" all the time.

I hope I'm water, soft, clear, transparent and fearless.

I need to draw a line between work and rest. I need to do more and speak less.

I need to be alert to my laziness, greed and ignorance.

If a table is left un-wiped for too long, the dust would become too thick to clean. The danger is that gradually one would get used to dust and wouldn't feel uncomfortable at all.

2013.9.9 Mon. Rainy

It rained the whole night, washing away the dust on the plants. The corn in front of the library looks so refreshed. But the village roads turned into rivers again. Autumn rain makes it much cooler. Now I need a quilt in the evening to prevent catching a cold.

A gust of wind blows down many leaves from the trees. The surrounding natural scenery has changed quickly. In just a couple of days, thanks to a gust of wind or a rain, the scenery changes completely. I needed my camera to record all these subtle changes. They are very delicate and rich. We tend to remember that we need warmer clothes but often forget to enjoy the beauty of the changing seasons.

2013.9.10 Tue. Overcast

I watched *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* once again yesterday. It's a great documentary. To watch it is like having the opportunity to enjoy the feast of sushi prepared by Jiro. It looks simple but rich. I made a comparison between Jiro's sushi and my art. I felt that Jiro was a true artist and yet I had a long way to go. The paths to become a great sushi maker and a great artist are fundamentally the same. According to Jiro, to be able to present something delicious, one has to be a gourmet to know what "delicious" means. Only in that way could one make something really delicious for the customers. As an artist, one should also know what good art is. Only when you've seen good art are you able to produce something that will truly pull at the viewers' heartstrings.

I'm not satisfied with Zhong Ming's work and once again I doubt my choice. Some seven months have passed and it seems he still hasn't found the right "feeling" for videotaping. I described him as a blunt knife that I would need to grind for quite a long time before I could actually use it. Also, he is like a heavy stone mill which doesn't move without a push. I really want to let him go and I can do the videotaping myself. He is not only inactive but also lacks the necessary knowledge and experience. I paid him and had to teach him how to do the job.

I told him my thoughts. I believed I should let him know his problems and my dissatisfaction, even though it made him uncomfortable. I told him, I will let you finish the project. If you learned things from it and became truly ready for the job, I will feel relieved. If you remain the same in the end, I will feel that's my failure as it means you wasted an opportunity and I wasted my time and energy.

Gradually I feel I am on a lonely journey.

2013.9.13 Fri. Rainy

It kept raining for a couple of days.

Sari and Munro left yesterday afternoon. Before they left, they gave me some gifts. Some were for kids, some for adults. It's quite different from how Chinese people give gifts. Usually we will give people gifts when we first meet in the hope that it could facilitate what we are going to do. But they kept the gift-giving part to the end. In the last few days of their stay here, my parents started to begrudge them a bit as they had stayed for 17 days for free and didn't show any gesture of gratitude. My mother said next time if they came again she would absolutely charge them. Living in a place like China made us good at reading people's mind's from what they say and taking care of others' feelings. But for foreigners who come here for the first time, their logic is quite simple. They don't know how to express their gratitude and repay people's hospitality.

My mom brought back home the sheets they had used to wash. And while she was washing, she often complained: there're hairs all around. I told her that's because we are of different races and you need to be tolerant of that.

2013.9.14 Sat. Sunny

My third aunt left the rural village and moved to live in Dalian, a big city, together with her husband. Each time she came back she was well dressed and would generously give money to each of her relatives. Also during the Chinese New Year she sent money to relatives. We assumed she lived a good and wealthy life in the city. When she was seriously sick, I went to Dalian to visit her. When I was there I got to know the real life she lived. She never received much education. And after she settled down in Dalian, she made a living by street sweeping, rubbish collecting and working on construction sites. Her family lived in a small room of about 20sqm and lived a very frugal life. She earned her money in such a hard way and yet gave it to her relatives in such a generous manner. She put a row of big Sprite bottles filled with water on the heating radiator in her room so that they could have some warm water to wash their faces and feet. The tap in the toilet was always dripping and she put a bucket underneath. In this way, she could collect water without the meter running. I used to think she lived a good life so I never paid her a visit in Dalian. I was only there, standing by her side, when she was about to die. It was such a shame.

2013.9.19 Wed. Sunny

Tomorrow will be the Mid-Autumn Festival. I bought 4 boxes of moon cakes online, one for Xiaoshi, one for my second sister, one for teacher Wei and the last one for ourselves. I also bought another two boxes, which were a bit more expensive, one for Fangfang and one for my uncle in Dalian.

Festival is a great time to show gratitude. If a little nice thing brings people happiness and warmth, why wouldn't you do it?

I went to visit my eldest sister yesterday and on my way back, as it was quite late and cool, I caught a cold. I remained awake since 3am and started to have a fever. I felt so weak and dizzy.

9. Time I Spent outside the Village

2013.9.27 Fri. Sunny

I woke up before daybreak and couldn't fall asleep again.

2013.9.29 Sun. Overcast

According to Krishnamurti, "he who is very successful is not truly free". And yet I am always dreaming of being "very successful".

2013.10.5 Sat. Sunny

If I did an art project in the village and didn't take photo/video or even write anything about it, would that art project "exist"? If an artist has to resort to photo or other media to represent his project, is that right? Can it be changed? If we don't make a record, or say if we let the project be retained only in non-physical form, could that be an alternative? Wouldn't it seem too intentional if we create something non-physical for the sake of keeping it physical? If that's the case, to intentionally not make any record is in nature the same as making a record. Could the act of recording be seen as an act of creation? To record is to create. To record is not to reproduce what has happened but to look for new possibilities in art. It's a process of thinking.

Krishnamurti wrote: "A new consciousness and a totally new morality are necessary to bring about a radical change in the present culture and social structure. [...] One has to be a light to oneself; this light is the law. There is no other law. [...] To be a light to oneself is not to follow the light of another, however reasonable, logical, historical, and however convincing. You cannot be a light to yourself if you are in the dark shadows of authority, of dogma, of conclusion. [...] Freedom is to be a light to oneself; then it is not an abstraction, a thing conjured by thought. Actual freedom is freedom from dependency, attachment, from the craving for experience. Freedom from the very structure of thought is to be a light to oneself."

2013.10.6 Sun. Rainy

I realized all that has been recorded in my diary are fragmented feelings and thoughts. There are few detailed descriptions. I made a record of something out of interest, not really using it as a way to record the project. Often I find myself remembering many interesting things and scenes but they never appear in my diary. I often felt that there wasn't much worth writing down and I used it as an excuse for my laziness. Did I choose not to make a record of them because they were not significant, special, or profound enough? Or was it because of something else? The record of the project seems quite incomplete and fragmented, and many interesting things are missing.

There're several things I want to add: 1. I remember an incident. Many years ago, one day when I came back home after school, I heard very sad cries from the neighbor's. I knew that was because Wang Gaoqi failed the entrance examination and his family was too poor to afford him to try a second time. (His father spent all his savings to find his elder brother a wife). Wang Gaoqi cried so loudly and desperately. I told Sari this story. The next day she told me she was deeply touched by it. 2. Since Sari and Munro arrived at Qiuzhuang, Wang Gaoqi got the chance to speak some English. He took out his old English textbooks and spent the evenings learning English. In daytime, he would speak English to them. It surprised his fellow villagers. A farmer managed to speak with foreigners. Apparently, Wang Gaoqi found confidence and he seemed quite pleased every day. 3. These days are the harvest season. Wang Gaoqi was once again bedridden, and his wife, Yanliu, had to do everything by herself. According to Yanliu, since she complained a bit about Wang Gaoqi not helping her mother carry the corn, he felt hurt and slapped himself on the face, calling himself impotent. After that he went to sleep and refused to get up again. People are now used to that.

Krishnamurti wrote in *Anonymous Creativity*: "We want to be famous as a writer, as a poet, as a painter, as a politician, as a singer, or what you will. Why? Because we really don't love what we are doing. If you loved to sing, or to paint, or to write poems - if you really loved it - you would not be concerned with whether you are famous or not. [...] [...] You know, it is good to hide your brilliance under a bushel, to be anonymous, to love what you are doing and not to show off. It is good to be kind without a name."

2013.10.17 Thu. Overcast

Cultural colonization - I believe it must be a means with political or economic purposes; it implies the confrontation between the strong and the weak and hence inequality; it must be malicious and aimed at fulfilling one's own will. The party that is colonized will eventually be changed and alienated.

The Qiuzhuang Project introduced western art into a remote rural village in China. If this is seen as cultural colonization, then a large part of what we do belongs to cultural colonization. To teach students western culture and art, to organize western art shows at museums, to send students to study abroad and to publish books on western culture and art, all these are acts of cultural colonization. The Qiuzhuang Project is in nature the same as these cultural exchange activities; the difference lies in that the Qiuzhuang Project is an art project and free of charge.

It's pointless to struggle with whether it's cultural colonization or not. What matters is to look at the village, the situation and problems it is faced with, through art. Of course there are a bunch of other ways to carry out research on rural villages. Qiuzhuang Project is just a way I'm interested in.

2013.10.23 Wed. Sunny

I can feel certain changes taking place. Earlier this year when I started the Qiuzhuang Project, what I truly thought of was cities. I wanted to spend more time in Shanghai, to attend exhibitions and discussions. I worried that spending too much time at Qiuzhuang would isolate me from the outside world. But now that I live in the city, I think about Qiuzhuang all the time and want to go back there as soon as possible. It seems I can only feel at ease when I am there.

Now I realize that during the past ten months, I never truly knew the village and our camera didn't take a good record of the village at all. We only recorded things that were visible, but failed to catch the soul of the village. Now all of a sudden I feel everything was worth observing and recording. I feel time is running out so quickly. The Qiuzhuang Project is not just about western artworks. More importantly, it's about the village, which makes it hard to tell which parts are my work and which are not.

I realize nowadays rural villages are highly different from before. Farmers are not passionate about their land and farming. They try everything they can to avoid the onerous labor, and they work in fields only when they have to. Nowadays people spend less time working in the fields. Basically they work only during seeding and

harvest seasons and they rely on large seeders and harvesters. Unlike the elder generation, now people do not share that deep attachment to the land; and they don't have the profound knowledge of the land they work on as their ancestors did. Naturally, such labor is deprived of happiness.

Due to the road expansion project, houses of many villagers will be demolished. The government left the villagers no room for negotiation and just sent people to do the measurements. Then villagers were told the compensation standard and the deadline for moving. They didn't raise questions or react against this arrangement. What they could do was merely to build some temporary structures in their yards in order to claim more compensation. I think that shows their lack of attachment to the place where they've lived for so many years. As long as more financial compensation can be gained, it doesn't matter where you live. What else do they care about other than practical benefits?

Efficiency, that's what everyone is after. Efficiency is money. Vast pieces of farmland are transformed into factories and workshops. People raise chicks, ducks, pigs, sheep and cattle, and in order to make more profits, they add more hormones and chemical elements into the feed. They have zero communication with the animals they raise. Suddenly I realize we've lost a lot during the process. People pursue efficiency at the expense of losing their attachment to the land, other living creatures and the natural environment.

Has agricultural civilization disappeared in villages? Or will it soon disappear?

2013.11.5 Tue. Sunny

To Zhong Ming

The day before yesterday I read Ogawa Shinsuke's *Harvesting Movie*, in which he told his cameraman Tamura whether shooting insects or plants, one single shot should take at least thirty seconds. He constantly told Tamura the importance of being concentrative.

Lately I've been out of village and thought a lot about what we did during the past several months. It felt like, in a sense, things were constantly repeating themselves. To avoid repetitive shooting, we tended to not to shoot the scenes we had shot. It is easy for us to lose interest in things that we think are repetitive. However, after second thought, don't we feel that "time", which is highly stressed by us, is exactly an embodiment of repetitiveness? Moreover, things that are seemingly repetitive are not exactly the same, are they? Therefore, we need to focus our lens on repetitive daily life and to shoot the repetitiveness to taste the subtle differences

within it. If we do perceive the subtle differences, I think that's when we truly capture something important.

I'm glad that I started to realize this within a year. In the meantime, I also realize that our work has just started.

I constantly ask myself: Why did I come back to the village? Why did I initiate such a project? Is it only to complete a year-long art project? Why would I want to continue to stay in the village and start a project for the next year? Where does the attraction lie?

Every day is a good day. I hope we can learn and make progress together.

10. Chilly Winter

2013.11.19 Tue. Sunny

It's been several days since I came back to Qiuzhuang. But I have done nothing.

It was autumn when I left. And now that I have returned, it is already chilly winter. The coldness makes me uncomfortable. Like always, my hands and feet feel chilly. I'm afraid I will catch chilblains again. The only way I know to combat it is to exercise. Of course, I can also opt for leaving.

The withered leaves on the trees indicate autumn hasn't gone completely. The village is still very dusty, especially when trucks pass by. I often try to shut down my nose, but it's not of much help.

Zhong Ming and I went to the bird market in town to film how my father sold his birds. I kept a distance from him, and observed his movements. Looking at his greyish hair and increasingly feeble body, I felt he looked cool and magnificent. I believe I inherited the sense of magnificence from him.

The Tibetan Mastiff raised by Li Changshun was poisoned to death by a needle. It's unexpected the big black dog who often barked at people met this fate. Li Changshun was very sad and said he would not eat a piece of dog meat. Pan Deng is full of adventurous spirit when it comes to eating. He bought the dead dog, cooked it and shared it with a couple of friends.

To people living here, Qiuzhuang is the whole world. Their values and lifestyles are all rooted in this village.

The sesame oil processing plant, "Sesame Oil Beauty", owned by my former classmate, officially opened and she invited us to have dinner together. It was quite boring. Because of drinking, there wasn't any genuine communication. Because of smoking, the room felt so polluted. Because of the excessive supply of food, people's health would be affected. All my former classmates are getting old and their children are mostly in their twenties. I am the only one who is not a father yet. I am the only one who makes a living by doing what I like.

2013.11.22 Fri. Sunny

Zhong Ming has made significant progress. The video he takes now is quite steady and he handles things well. I'm glad to see his growth. When he first arrived at Qiuzhuang, he didn't know how to use a camera. Nor did he know how to talk with people. But now he films all around the village, including both public and private spaces, and can talk freely with people.

The power of imagination – under no circumstance should we lose our power of imagination. Works deprived of imagination appear banal and boring. I often think of myself as someone lacking the power of imagination.

The tree in front of the Sol LeWitt painting started to wither. A couple of yellow persimmons hang on its branches. Shitong and Shixuan often play in front of the wall and like climbing the tree. I'm not sure if they think the painting is beautiful. But when I see them in front of the wall, I think it is a beautiful scene.

The string beans in front of John Kormeling's "HI HA" are gone. The owner of the garden re-trimmed it and planted some green vegetables and garlic in it. As if a rebirth, "HI HA" is now fully exposed to the outside and glitters ceaselessly. In the evening, the glittering "HI HA" imbues the village with a sense of festival joy.

My father is not quite willing to turn on Dan Flavin's light installation as it is very power-consuming. He often forgets to turn it on. But I think this was intentional. When that happens, either I myself or Zhong Ming insert the plug in the socket to turn it on. Probably because of the coldness, two fluorescent tubes no longer work. The corn planted in front of the library have been harvested. The corn was small. Shriveled cornstalks and leaves were used to feed sheep by the grandpa who made a living by making paper caps. My mother scattered wheat seeds together with a lot of garlic within the fencing decorated with Daniel Buren's stripes. Since she didn't put any pesticides in the wheat seeds, many sparrows came. Everyday they dug at the ground, eating the wheat seeds. As a result, the garlic bulbs were exposed to the open air.

I felt Richard Long's "Wood Circle" should be placed outside the village as it required more natural space. I found a piece of open land beside the river at the east side of the village. It is right beside the Fuxin River. The location is perfect and has a very good and open view. Now I can consider installing the work.

2013.11.23 Sat. Rainy

It's raining.

The road is getting muddy again. It's been raining for two days, and after that it will be even chillier than before.

The village looks more vivid due to the presence of these artworks. Bright colors imbue the greyish village with warmth and vitality.

People tend to measure your value based on the physical fortune you own. So do the villagers. No matter how knowledgeable you are, how well-educated you are, if you are financially poor, you are a loser. If you are poor, you don't have value. I can guess the pressure and pain my parents undergo due to my lack of success.

My mom sat by my bed early this morning when I was still sleeping. She said, with a sense of blame, "You always postpone having a baby and you're still childless. Every evening I find it hard to get to sleep because I worry for you." What could I say? I know nothing I say can soothe her.

Regardless of the fact that he suffers from myocardial infarction and against the doctor's advice, my father smokes more and more and fills his stomach so full at each meal. Nothing I say influences him. Everyone has his own fate and whatever happens, we can only face it. Apparently, he doesn't understand my art and he said he can't see the value of my work. He constantly suggests that I close down the library during the Chinese New Year and not open it again.

I came back home to carry on with my artistic practice. My family gave me great help and support, and in the meantime, they also became a great interference in a way. Outside, it is still raining.

2013.11.25 Mon. Sunny

Some red spots started to appear in my left hand, an indicator of chilblains. It seems the bacteria of chilblains sleep under my skin and they come back to life when it reaches a certain temperature and humidity. No matter what protective measures you take, you cannot stop them from reviving.

I decided to combat the chilblains "army" by exercising.

In winter I always want to run away from here. It's even colder inside the house. Windows and doors are open all day. There's no stove, no heating. People wear the warmest clothes they have and still feel so cold. Or they choose to go to bed so early to combat the cold winter night. It seems other than the bed, nowhere else is warm. I remember when I was young, my hands and feet suffered from chilblains during winter time. It is a horrible memory. To escape the harsh natural conditions here was one of the reasons I wanted to leave. I feel that my body is not respected here. I

always dreamed of living in a comfortable place. I firmly believe there would be such a place.

Twenty years have passed and this place remains the same. People still lead their lives like pigs, breathing and laboring under filthy and harsh conditions. Actually, this place is even dirtier than before due to the environmental pollution. There is filthy rubbish everywhere. However, people living here are used to it. Nobody ever talks to me about the filthiness and harshness. They seem happy and think this is what life supposed to be. I was not used to it when I was a kid. I still am not.

At the dinner table, father started to think about how to deal with the desks and chairs when the library closes. He said it wouldn't be of much value if I continued to run the library as the project was about to come to an end. Indeed, he often saw me spending money but never saw me making money back. He was about to lose his patience. Like my mother, he also spent a lot of time and energy on the project. It's highly possible that someday they both will feel that they cannot bear it anymore. If they cannot bear me staying at home, I really cannot carry on.

I probably should close down the library and leave the village after the Chinese New Year. I can come back when I earn some money.

I probably should close down the library and leave the village after the Chinese New Year. I set up the library because I know villagers didn't need the library and didn't even know what a library was. They doubted the function of a library. But now they have accepted it and it seems to have become part of the village. Children told me they couldn't live without it. People understand the importance of library. By then I think I could close down the library.

Instinctively speaking, I don't want to be kidnapped by morality. I don't want to do things that are taken for granted. Sensibly speaking, I should continue to run the library as it seems it will be of help to the village. However, I'm alert to impulsive actions. I hope what I do could be more ground-breaking.

Perhaps I should close down the library after I complete the *Annals of Qiuzhuang*.

You see, I am very good at finding excuses for myself. Nothing is ground-breaking. My left brain resorts to sense and experience to analyze and guide my actions. I should listen to my heart. Do I really want to close down the library? My heart tells me: no. At the bottom of my heart, I hope the library will always be there.

Father is eager to play a part but I should not be affected by him. The library shouldn't be closed down. I have to keep it going. Even if I am out of the village, the library should be here. I often say that limitation tends to give birth to creativity, don't I? Now here comes the limitation, how should I deal with it?

A traditional code of conduct has taken over my father completely. But it has not taken over me, yet. I don't want to be controlled by it. I want to listen to the voice of my heart.

The library didn't organize many events. After the picnic no more such events were organized. Without events and the introduction of new books, fewer children come

to the library. I'm so lazy and haven't put much thought into it. It's so easy to do nothing and yet it's always so hard to do something.

Without supervision or guidance, I become lazier. And Zhong Ming is a man without much passion. In the end, we both become even lazier.

2013.11.26 Tue. Sunny

Due to the chilliness, in the morning the muddy road became bumpy. The water in the basin froze.

Uncle Fan Jingyi, who lives next door to the library, suffers from hemiplegia and spends all day sitting in front of his house. He always scolds his wife, who takes care of him, so loudly and desperately. When his wife can't stand him anymore, she also scolds him and slaps his face. I can understand his wife's anger and pain: after being bullied by her husband for a lifetime, she now has to not only do all the work in the field but also take care of her husband and listen to his cursing. Since he is paralyzed now, she can finally fight back. But after she fights back, she still needs to help him defecate (sometimes she had to use her hands), to wipe his ass, to help him get dressed, to cook for him and to go out to work. Their eldest son, Fan Jian, is in his fifties, and is too poor to marry a wife. He works at some construction sites in town to earn some money to support the family and to pay for his father's medical expenses.

Seeing them fighting, I was unable to set up the camera to shoot.

Yu Ji called, inviting me to do a performance at AM Art Space in Shanghai. What could I present? I often feel I cannot do performance. But whenever I have such thoughts, a voice in my head speaks to me: You take the notion of performance as a kind of fixed experience. Everything can be performance. What matters is what you think rather than what you perform.

I hear a voice in my head: the podium is the stage.

As the podium is the stage, talking is also performance. Performance doesn't necessarily require body movements. Can a conversation that has already taken place be re-performed? Take the conversation between Na Yingyu and me concerning Qiuzhuang for instance. Can it be re-performed in Shanghai by someone else? If so, as long as we can provide a script, the conversation can take place literarily everywhere and Na Yingyu and I don't have to be present at all. In that case, important conversations can be repeated endlessly and audiences can listen to the live conversations.

2013.11.27 Wed. Sunny

It was windy the whole night. Leaves, torn from the branches, were everywhere. Mom heard the noise made by the iron gate in the middle of the night due to the strong wind. She feared that the rain cloth covering the light installation would be blown away, so she got up to fix it.

Father said it would be hard to keep the wood circle if it was to be put outside the village. In no time people would take it for firewood. If we put it in our own field, it would be easier for us to keep an eye on it and in the end we could keep it as our firewood. I was grateful for his thoughtfulness but still wanted to put it at the riverside outside the village. Firstly, the view is beautiful there. And secondly, I like the sense of risk that it might be stolen. It's feasible to put it in our field. But it would be too safe and the sense of excitement would be deprived.

Can I put Carl Andre's 25 steel plates in my own yard?

2013.12.1 Sun. Sunny

I came back to the village after attending an exhibition in Nanjing. The road in the villages are still muddy.

Zhong Ming went to Nanjing with me. I could feel he was curious about the big city and the big city made him a bit nervous. But when he came back to Qiuzhuang, he became more confident, and even the way he walked seemed different.

2013.12.4 Wed. Sunny

My second elder sister went to my uncle's to visit his granddaughter Yutong. But father doesn't want us to have anything to do with our uncle, so he was very angry with my sister. They had a fight, and my sister left, so furious.

Haitao, the second son of my uncle, will get married after the Chinese New Year. Father doesn't want us to attend the wedding. But my sister and I feel we should go. Father is very angry. He gave his ultimatum: if you attend the wedding I will drink pesticide to commit suicide.

Father is always like this, very narrow-minded. According to my mom, his mind is as big as a grain of sesame. Chauvinistic, hegemonic and self-centered can all be used to describe him.

I think we should not be affected by the conflicts between him and uncle. We get along with our uncle's two sons. We also get along with our uncle. We are all in our forties and have our own families. We should be responsible for own actions rather than be controlled by father. This time I will encourage my sisters to do what they think is the right thing to do and not to be affected by my father's narrow-mindedness. My father is always like this. People live in fear because of him.

I think now I am able to make peace with him. But it seems now I still cannot bear him and I will not let him do whatever he feels like doing.

2013.12.7 Sat. Foggy

It was foggy in the morning.

Uncle Li Jintai went to the library to see me in the evening. He went to Shanghai to visit his daughter and brought back two oil paintings. They were just mediocre oil paintings but he considered them to be very precious. I told him it didn't matter how good they were as long as he liked them.

At his home, Sol LeWitt's "Wall Structure" was filled with all kinds of wine bottles and daily necessities. Andy Warhol's portraits of Mao Zedong were put beside the "structure". And now he also put one of the oil paintings beside the "structure". He is really a man fond of art.

He is busy making money and leaves the new house undecorated. It seems Sol LeWitt's wall painting will not be recreated in his living room until next year.

Wang Xueyi and his daughter had some conflicts. Her daughter is about to take the entrance examination. Wang Xueyi makes money by carrying logs. It's a tedious job. He complained that his daughter costs him so much money. His daughter was quite sensitive and angry to hear that. Then he became so furious, throwing the cookers and rice and vegetables in the cookers all over the yard. His daughter refused to eat and kept crying.

Wang Gaoqi told me the frustration he experienced in life. He failed his first entrance examination and wanted to sit for the examination for the second time. But his father used up the only money he had to help his elder brother to marry a wife. At that time, it was such a difficult decision for his father to make and he was very close to committing suicide. Wang Gaoqi said he fought for it but his destiny didn't allow him to continue his education. After all, his family was too poor.

2013.12.8 Sun. Overcast

I've been so inefficient for days and literarily have done nothing.

There are two "mes" in my body: one wants to succeed and the other just wants to do what he likes and doesn't think success matters. The two "mes" keep competing in my mind.

What is success? Is it also a kind of success if you are able to spend life in the way you like and do not have to chase fame and fortune? Success is for ourselves and not for showing off.

I have the habit of walking the dog along the river every dusk. It helps me to withstand the chilliness.

2013.12.13 Fri. Sunny

Jiao Dongyu, journalist from *China Weekly*, wanted to write the story of the Qiuzhuang Project. He wanted to learn more about how villagers received Andy Warhol's "Mao Zedong". He said such a story would be both interesting and political, which is in line with the style of their magazine.

He interviewed Yang Gaoju in the afternoon. They sat face to face, talking, and I sat beside them, listening. The way he interviewed people was quite laid-back. They talked about art and life. Yang Gaoju said he had intended to make an oil painting which would feature Mao's images during different periods this year as this would be the 120th anniversary of Mao's birth. But due to the demolition programme, the plan had to be delayed. He showed us the sketch of that painting.

Davide Quadrio called me this afternoon, saying that he had confirmed with Charles Esche that Qiuzhuang Project would be presented at the Sao Paulo Biennale next year. Charles will be the curator for the biennale. Also, he said that the Mondrian Foundation would support the project, and two museums in Italy and London intended to hold exhibitions of the project in 2015 and 2016.

I am not surprised by the exhibition plans following the project but I'm a bit concerned. I fear that I will not be able to complete the exhibitions, to handle bigger exhibition spaces, to lose my own working rhythm and independence. At such time, I think about Hsieh Te-Ching and Gu Dexin. Their independent spirits and personalities are like a mirror to me. Things are not that complicated. As long as I am not lured by the so-called opportunities or the potential profit, I can keep my working rhythm.

2013.12.15 Sun. Sunny

Jiao Dongyu is a good journalist and his interviews often started from small things. They were like casual chats without questions or fixed patterns. But in the meantime he managed to maintain his attitudes and focus. Though he doesn't know much about art, he has a sensitive heart and a quick mind, which enables him to carry out some special interviews.

This time, he interviewed Yang Gaoju, my father, Lu Daode, me, Sun Xingfa, Zhong Ming and teacher Wei. I look forward to reading his article.

In the afternoon when I passed by Mao's portraits, we found that there were many holes in the yellow one. All the holes were on Mao's face. Who tried to find fault with chairman Mao? Or with us? I asked Wang Gaoqi, who was chatting with some people in front of his store. He said: "Just now there were two children using sticks poking Mao's face. I roared at them and they ran away." I asked if he recognized the children. He said he didn't.

After seeing the portraits and badges of Mao Zedong collected by Sun Guangfa and the Mao painted by Yang Gaoju, it occurred to me that we could present an exhibition about Mao Zedong in the library. It could feature the three portraits by Andy Warhol, the painting by Yang Gaoju and the collection of Sun Guangfa.

2013.12.31 Mon. Sunny

Shanghai.

The performance by Na Yingyu and I went well at AM Art Space. The performance consists of three elements: 1. The LCD screens on the walls ran a slide show of 480 photos about the Qiuzhuang Project. 2. Na Yingyu and I sat face to face in the middle of the space, having two cans of beer and talking about the incomes and expenses of the Qiuzhuang Project. And 3. Yu Ji used a crayon to take note of the items of the accounts we mentioned on the wall.

The performance lasted about 50 minutes, and some people felt it was boring and left in the middle of it. I felt it was good. We talked only about the items of accounting and nothing academic. Apparently it's not in line with some people's aesthetic taste.

There was an internal discussion in the morning the next day, during which Xiaoquan asked me if it was a live performance or just a conversation. I told him I didn't want to define it. It's good to keep it at a position somewhere in between. Categorization

and definition tend to restrict the possibilities of things and make people lazy mentally.

Na Yingyu suggested to we could make a diary-based documentary for the project. Each day could be a chapter and we should not control the length of the documentary. It was a good suggestion. I thought my dairy and the moving images could complement each other.

If Na Yingyu would be in charge of the editing of the documentary, I definitely trust him. We have a consensus: we don't want to make a story-telling documentary. He spent much time living at Qiuzhuang, observing the project, and had a lot of communication with me.

Jiao Dongyu completed his article and entitled it "Pop Chairman Coming to Village". It missed the opportunity to be published in the first issue of the year and will be published in the February issue of 2014.

11. 25 Steel Plates

2014.1.1. Wed. Sunny

The year 2014 has officially started. I feel I'm more peaceful than before. I can sense the joy brought to me by the peacefulness.

2014.1.5 Sun. Overcast

I completed those watercolors and came back to Qiuzhuang. My parents and I don't talk a lot. We just have our meals, watch some TV and do some tidying up. Life is always like this in this place. Parents never teach their children how to express their feelings. Neither do they encourage us to do so. Most of the time we just do things quietly and keep our love for each other to ourselves. At first sight, you'd think we are indifferent to each other.

Last night I read *Fu Lei's Family Letters*. I read it out loud to Fang. And gradually I felt I couldn't help from crying. I couldn't continue to read, choking with sobs. I told her I was sorry. Fang said: "That's what I love about you. You have a gentle heart."

Charles Esche wanted to buy all the 11 watercolors for the collection of the Van Abbemuseum. The total price was USD16,000.

People easily become lazy in places that are cold. The harsher it is, the more patience and determination are required, and the more patience and determination can be forged.

In the evening, it is dark all around, so dark that I can no longer see my fingers.

2014.1.6 Mon. Sunny

In the evening, my parents asked me to go to their bedroom.

Father said to me, solemnly, "After the Chinese New Year, stop your art project in the village. Go find a job, a steady one. You spent a whole year doing this I-don't-know-what and couldn't make money from it."

I argued that "What I do is what I like. I like this career. Moreover, I sold some paintings and earned some money, didn't I? I used that money to support the project."

Mother agreed with father: "What's the use of those things you did in the village? They cannot be sold for money."

I felt indignant, helpless and speechless.

I just said: "I like what I do. It's my career."

Then I left, without another word.

I walked out of the gate, standing in the darkness for quite a long time...

During the past year, my parents were the closest ones to me. They saw me working everyday till late night, busy running about, and they didn't understand and couldn't see the value of what I did. Money is the only criterion for them to measure the value of something. And from this perspective, they couldn't see any value. Or if there is some, they despise the so-called "value".

At such moments, I always feel that there is this huge gap between my parents and me, spiritually speaking.

Certainly, I never expect to change my parents or the village. I just want to spend time living with them, peacefully and equally. The foundation for equality is mutual respect. But it's very hard to achieve.

My parents just want me to be like others - making some money, having a baby and living an ordinary life. They cannot bear my spiritual pursuits and my difference from others.

I remembered the spiritual guidance and advice Fu Lei gave to his son, and for a moment I felt my father didn't deserve to be a father. He is almost barren, spiritually speaking. How could he give anything spiritual to his son? Moreover, instead of giving any spiritual guidance, he gave his son a lot of complaints and obstacles.

It seems other than kinship there's nothing left between him and me.

On the one hand, they are kind and hard-working; and on the other hand, they are uneducated.

Once again I feel the strong urge to leave this place. Leave here. I must.

2014.1.7 Tue. Overcast

Today I went to the steel market to make 25 steel plates. The cost was RMB39 per plate. So RMB975 for 25 pieces and plus RMB40 for transport fees the total reached RMB1,015.

The workers made the drawing on the computer and then transmitted it to the cutter. It took about 40 minutes to cut it from a big steel plate. The owner of the workshop asked me if I wanted to take them back or if I wanted them to be further processed, like to be ground, painted and decorated. I told him: "Just leave them like this. When I take them back they are art." He couldn't understand.

After I took them back home, father helped me to lay them under the corridor, one by one, to protect them from the rain. He, like the man at the market, couldn't understand either: "How can several steel plates laying on the floor become art? What's nice about them?" I told him: "The American artist saw everybody else put the works on the walls so he chose to lay them on the floor to break people's usual viewing habits. People could also step onto it. That's art."

He continued to ask: "Isn't that a waste of money? No one will ever buy this thing." I said: "After the project we could sell them as steel and take some money back." He did a count. The price for steel is RMB1.6 per kilogram so all those steel plates could be sold at the price about RMB400. It seemed to be a relief to him.

2014.1.9 Thu. Sunny

It was sunny today and my parents helped me to put all the 25 steel plates in the center of the yard.

Though father complained that the work was pointless, he still gave me a helping hand. As the bricks on the ground of the yard were paved unevenly, we had to spread a layer of sand before we laid the steel plates on it. Father has heart disease and can't squat. He had to hunch. Mother helped him spread the sand and move the steel plates.

After it was done, father was not satisfied, feeling that the texture on the steel plates seemed a bit messy. So he rearranged the positions of the plates according to their texture. After a while, he thought of putting his bird cages onto the plates. One cage on one plate. Among the joyful tweeting of the birds, I took a picture of him with two bird cages in his hands. He looked at his "work", satisfied. He pulled a chair over, lit a cigarette, and sat down on it, taking a good look at his "work".

Mom's hair seemed a bit messy and the thick clothes she wore made her look a bit clumsy and quite small. Looking at her, I felt sad all of a sudden. I enjoyed watching

my father working. Even now he still seems energetic and even a bit domineering, in a good way. In front of the camera, he showed the urge to express himself and seemed to enjoy being filmed.

I could tell he was happy today. He smoked two cigarettes during the break.

Carl Andre's *25 Steel Plates* was complete.

2014.1.11 Sat. Sunny

I'm sitting under my quilt and the parts of my body that are exposed to the air feel so cold. I still remember last winter when I had to wear a cotton hat when sleeping and my hands suffered from serious chilblains.

There's been no rain or snow so far since the cold season started. As usual, tree roots were burnt beside the store and a group of villagers gathered together, discussing politics, the economy, news, and the village.

In the morning, I had some fights with my mom. I felt she was unreasonable, narrow-minded and nagging. I told her I couldn't work in such circumstances and I would need her to stop complaining and nagging.

The chilly weather makes it hard to concentrate or to think. I feel so tired and sleepy.

2014.1.12 Sun. Sunny

Today is December 12 on the Lunar Calendar. It's my mom's birthday. Here people don't have the habit of celebrating birthdays, so we never really care about them. Father doesn't know his own birthday. He once asked my grandma but she couldn't remember.

2014.1.15 Wed. Overcast

It's my second visit to New York. I don't feel strange at all. Nothing seems to have changed. Nothing seems to change. Looking at the passengers in the subway and the graffiti all around, it seems I'm in some kind of nostalgic movie.

2014.1.18 Sat. Snowy

I gave a lecture at Fou Gallery in New York under the title “Qiuzhuang Project - Some People and Some Things”. The lecture centered on the stories about those who were involved in the project like my father, Wei Yiming, Lu Daode, Yang Gaoju, Sun Guangfa and Zhongming.

The lecture went well. I wrote a script in advance so that the content was controllable. The audience was interested in the content during the process. The second part of the lecture was a dialogue between Ellen and me plus Q&A with the audience. Ellen was kind and mostly expressed that she liked the project. So was the audience. While saying they liked the project, they also managed to lead me to say more about the project with some simple questions.

Actually, during the past several lectures, the audience’s reaction indicated that the project was quite interesting and appealed to both refined and popular taste. However, will such “appeal” conceal the academic superficiality? Xu Tan said questions from the audience were not professional and were superficial, and could not be further explored.

A girl wanted to make another appointment with me to talk about the fact that some intellectuals thought the project embodied cultural colonialism. What kind of intellectuals associated it with cultural colonialism? What is cultural colonialism? Why didn’t the villagers think they had been culturally colonized? What’re the advantages of colonization? What’re the disadvantages?

Many years ago some western countries brought Chinese art to the west through robbery, and displayed them in the museums. Though the works were well protected, they were taken by force. Today I bring western art to a Chinese village in a different way. Is this cultural colonization?

After going back to the hotel, Xu Tan and I continued to chat a bit. We talked about art and artworks. He said artworks should not be confused with art. When seeing my father hanging bird cages on Sol LeWitt’s “ladder”, he was so pleased because at that moment art came into being. That was art. To take pictures of the “ladder” and bird cages and to show them in an art museum, that’s artwork.

2014.1.21 Tue. Snowy

It snowed heavily today. Seen from the gate of the hotel, the street view of New York was so beautiful.

Many westerners give Chinese people support and help. To a certain degree, it involves some compassion from a superior nation to an inferior nation. Such compassion makes it impossible to further probe into the issue as serious exploration is blocked by emotion. Certainly, such compassion is well-meant, friendly and innocent. Academic exploration is supposed to be based on an equal foundation. Only in this way can the true problem be touched upon and furthered.

During the Q&A session, a boy asked if the contextuality of the artworks I chose didn't work and disappeared when I brought them to the village. Ellen quickly answered him: the villagers accepted the art from an aesthetic perspective and contextuality was not necessarily needed. Villagers had the right to accept the art from their own perspective.

Ellen, with great kindness, avoided the importance of the contextuality of the original works and kept the question centered on villagers' right to decide how to accept the works. Has the contextuality of the original works totally been blocked from the villagers' world? Has the original cultural background been erased? Would it be too simplified to say that the villagers accepted art only from the aesthetic and practical perspectives?

2014.1.23 Thu. Sunny

The snow stopped and it was sunny.

I realize the importance of getting out to take a look doesn't lie in how much knowledge you can learn or how many exhibitions you can see. It helps you to develop a kind of open state, an open thinking mode and perspective. When we stay at a certain place for long we tend to form a fixed thinking pattern which affects our flexibility. As a matter of fact, how many works you can produce doesn't really matter. What matters is the state of life. A good and healthy state will naturally lead to some good works. And even it won't, it doesn't matter.

2014.1.24 Fri. Sunny

I was back in Suzhou from New York.

Fang fang said I was so tough, not tender at all.

That's true. Every time we depart for a period of time I seem not tender when we meet again because I'm not used to it. Usually it takes one or two days for me to recover.

2014.1.26 Sun. Sunny

Haitao, the second son of my uncle, will get married on the sixth day of the Chinese New Year. Uncle will arrange a big feast to entertain all the guests. It's a tradition here that if you need other villagers to help, you will need to invite them to have a meal together in advance.

My father and uncle no longer talk to each other due to their fight over the land.

Teacher Wei thought this could be a chance for them to make peace. So he asked uncle to go to my home to invite my father. Father was determined not to resume the relation between them and therefore didn't want to accept the invitation. But in the end, he still went to my uncle's. He just showed up for a while and didn't stay for dinner.

Father insisted he didn't want to have anything to do with uncle. He said he would give them a cash gift for the wedding but he insisted on not going to have meal at my uncle's.

2014.1.27 Mon. Sunny

It still hasn't snowed. Probably this is going to be a snowless winter.

The temperature is not that low but it feels so cold at Qiuzhuang. There is no heating, no air-conditioning, no stove in the house. The only way for people to fight against the chilliness is to put on more clothes.

Mom said there was a strong wind in the evening the other day. The rain cloth on Dan Flavin's light installation was blown away and two lights were smashed.

The Chinese New Year is approaching, and many who left to work in big cities gradually come back.

I asked father: "If you realized you did something wrong, would you admit it?" He said: "Yes. If I realize I did something wrong, I would admit it." I said: "Then you are very brave." Mom added: "I've never seen him admit any mistake, even once."

2014.1.29 Wed. Overcast

I've never felt so helpless.

In the face of my parent's ignorance and narrow-mindedness, I felt nothing I said could change anything. The more I say, the more conflicts between my parents and I. I thought my parents were kind and honest people. But the truth is not that simple. They are as narrow-minded, selfish, stupid and ignorant as other peasants. All the weakness of peasants could be found within them.

I can't bear to see my parents live such a hard life. But I can't do anything. I can't help them ease their pain.

Qingqing and her boyfriend, Li Rongzhou, sent me some books and a piece of calligraphic work, writing: independent spirit and free mind. (by Chen Yinqu)

2014.1.30 Thu. Overcast

It's New Year's Eve.

The day before yesterday my cousins and me visited Jiang Yongjun's grave. He died in 2009 during a car accident. His grave was recently moved forward about 8 meters so that it could be next door to his mother's grave. Someone put a new wreath in front of it.

Afterwards I invited everyone to have dinner in town. Li Chengxin was busy this time of the year as he needed to slaughter pigs till midnight. So he was absent. I felt there was an invisible wall between them and me. They didn't understand me and I felt it hard to communicate with them.

Like last year I bought 2 big fireworks.

Father lit the firecrackers on Carl Andre's 25 steel plates. After the noise, the flare and the smoke, traces of fireworks could be seen on the plates.

2014.1.31 Fri. Overcast

At Qiuzhuang, we still maintain the tradition of kowtowing to the elderly. Such a tradition is not often seen nowadays in China. I used to hate such traditions. But for the past several decades, in the morning of the first day of Chinese New Year, I observe the customs.

Teacher Wei bought a roll of 4,000 firecrackers and lit it in front of the library on the first day of Chinese New Year before it opened. I clearly remembered that a year ago, also in the morning of first day of Chinese New Year, I lit the firecrackers. People all came to witness the opening of the library. It's been a whole year.

I gave my friend Xiao Shi a firework a few days ago. His second daughter, Shi Yutong, held the firework and kept asking him "dad, when should we light the firework?" On New Year's Eve Xiao Shi lit the firework... Yutong was scared and ran into the house. She dared not come out until it was done. She only saw the dying flame of the firework.

I encouraged Yutong to draw on the small black board the fireworks she saw. She drew it meticulously and the lines she drew were very powerful. She had talent in painting. Her parents teased her, saying that she missed the most beautiful part of the firework and only saw the dying flame. I said: "I'll buy you a beautiful firework next year. By then, you will be braver and will not miss the beautiful view. Then you can make another painting of the firework you see."

12. Circle of Sticks

2014.2.5 Wed. Snowy

It snowed heavily on the sixth day of Chinese New Year. It was belated and we had expected it for so long.

All that was dirty and messy was covered by the snow, and the village was turned into a fairy-tale world. Under the backdrop of flying snowflakes, the artworks seemed particularly beautiful. It was the first time Hali saw such a heavy snow. She was very excited, running and jumping all the way. Snowflakes fell on her, melting and making her look like a hedgehog.

Zhong Ming was born in the southern part of China and it was also the first time he experienced such heavy snow. He jumped into the snow pile like a tiger and let the white snow cover him.

Haitao got married. Father asked me to give them the cash gift but he insisted on not going to my uncle's house as he didn't want to eat with them. He said he had no intention to make peace with my uncle and he didn't want to come into contact with them in his lifetime.

After the wedding dinner, it was quite a messy scene - plastic bags, a plastic tablecloth, disposable chopsticks and bones were all over the floor. In the end, all this rubbish was thrown into the dried river.

I suffered from diarrhea and defecated three times a day. There must be something wrong with the food I ate at the wedding party. When I was a kid, I looked forward to wedding feasts. Now I am afraid of them. Nowadays there is an abundant supply of food, but the sanitary conditions are terrible. Meat and vegetables are cooked without being washed. Plates are washed in the water that has been used for a long time. In summer, before people start to enjoy the food, the flies take their share first. Neither the chef nor the helpers bother to wash their hands first.

I remember when I got married, I gave the four dishwashers one extra box of cigarette each. And the dishes at my wedding feast were washed really clean. I'd like to give teacher Wei a piece of advice: the dishwashers do the most tiring work, and they deserve something "extra". We could give them each an apron, two boxes of cigarette and a pair of rubber gloves to make sure they do a good job.

2014.2.6 Thu. Snowy

Wang Huanying has spent the past several years petitioning. Due to the road construction project, his store, which was located at the west end of the bridge, was labeled as “illegal construction”. But the building belonging to the village secretary, which was located at the east end of the bridge, was labeled as safe. He couldn’t be convinced by such a verdict and so he started to petition. The local court was partial to the village secretary, constantly intimidating him and demolished his store by force. He refused to accept the ruling and made use of the internet and writing to try to protect his rights.

Before the Chinese New Year, Zhu Xinyi wrote a pair of couplets for Huanying, which read: the plum blossoms fly all over the sky like snow, and it’s no surprise there are flies freezing to death. On the horizontal scroll he wrote: Unrestrained. He put the couplet in front of his store, letting it shiver in the chilly wind.

2014.2.7 Fri. Snowy

It kept snowing and the ground was covered by thick snow.

I swept the snow in my yard into two piles so two “snow mountains” appeared beside Carl Andre’s steel plates. The plates became rusty due to the melting snow and the original dark grey turned yellowish.

Shiru, Qiu Zhongjia and I made two big snowmen in front of Sol LeWitt’s wall painting. We also made several small snowmen. They could play the role as the kids of the two big snowmen.

2014.2.8 Sat. Overcast

It stopped snowing. Many icicles hung from the eaves.
Some kids break off the icicles and eat them like popsicles.

2014.2.9 Sun. Sunny

People tend to get lazy when it's cold outside. I get up quite late these days. The river bank is covered by snow and the wind is strong. I should try to make Richard Long's "Wood Circle" in these next few days. If I lay the twigs on the snow, then it melts, the twigs will naturally lie on the ground.

The road construction project is about to start. Construction of the bridge started before the Chinese New Year. Demolition would start in March and the road construction would start in June.

There are some red spots in my hands. They get itchy in the evening. These are the signs of chilblains.

2014.2.10 Mon. Sunny

The snow covering the river bank gradually melted. I decided it's time to complete Richard Long's "Wood Circle".

There were many twigs from apple trees and poplars in our field. Mom, Zhong Ming and I spent a whole afternoon sorting out these twigs.

The labor made us sweat, which was good. It's been quite a long time since I felt I was this close to the nature. I feel I'm often too close to art and books but too far away from the nature and the working people.

2014.2.11 Tue. Sunny

I changed my mind about inviting aunt Fan, who lived opposite the library, to make the twig installation. She was old and I dared not ask her to work a whole day at the riverside. Also, as her husband is paralyzed, she needs to take care of him all day long.

I invited my second aunt (Laiyuan's mom) to help me make the work. And my parents also helped.

I chose a place at the riverside where no crops were planted. I chose a point as the center of a circle, and used a 3.5m rope to draw a circle on the ground. Following

Richard Long's instructions, we tried to arrange the twigs in a parallel way and to make them fill the circle.

Laiyuan's mom was quick. After seeing me showing her how to do it, she quickly learned how to arrange the twigs. Mom was a bit slow in learning and often made mistakes.

We completed the work at around 1pm.

The snow melted, exposing the brown earth underneath. The twigs were new. The color of the twigs seemed a bit eye-catching. Generally speaking, this piece worked fine with the environment, and passers-by didn't even notice its existence. When Richard Long did it in nature, it probably looked just like this. Those we saw in museum spaces looked too much like specimens.

This was the last piece among the 10 pieces I chose to reproduce. The space I initially chose was used for other purposes by its owner. So I waited for quite some time for the proper space. I often felt it was hard to make this piece, and was patient to wait for the right time and right space. After the heavy snow, I realize it's time. It was quite a surprise that we could complete the work so quickly, so easily, so harmoniously and so cost-effectively.

Father feared that the work would be stolen by other villagers and be used as firewood. An uncle living nearby said he would keep an eye on the work for me. He said no one would steal the wood except the retarded guy living nearby. He didn't know it was art.

I spent the whole afternoon looking at the work. As the twigs were pointing in different directions, they reflected different colors under the sun. Some seemed blueish grey and some seemed dark brown. The parts under the sun gave out a warm color while the parts in the shadow appeared to be purplish grey. In some parts of the circle, snow could be seen in between the twigs. But in some parts of the circle, only the brown earth could be seen in between the twigs. The circle was placed on the riverside which was uneven, making the circle a bit irregular. The river was frozen, and the riverbank in the other side was still covered by snow. Withered reeds could be seen along the riverbanks, swaying to the wind.

This place is close to the village. I can hear dogs barking, men talking, cocks crowing and bulldozers making noises.

Under the sunset, the circle radiated a layer of gold. Gradually and slowly, the golden color disappeared and the circle as well as the whole environment became dark.

Evening came.

I hope the work will survive the whole four seasons here.

2014.2.13 Thu. Sunny

Davide Quadrio and Francesca Girelli came to Qiuzhuang today.

Davide spoke quite fast, making me unable to follow with my slow pace of thinking and expressing. We talked a lot but failed to further the conversation. I think no matter what we do, we need to keep our own pace and to avoid being disturbed by others. Before he came here, Davide already had some experience and knowledge about the project, which made it hard for him to quietly observe and to feel the project. I should control the pace of their visit.

At the very beginning of the project, Francesca bought a watercolor of mine to show her support. I was glad that she could actually come to the site.

2014.2.14 Fri. Sunny

Today is the Lantern Festival. Not many kids held a lantern on the street. But occasionally you could see some fireworks. When I was a kid, every boy in the village would hold a lantern made by his grandpa in his hand. They would gather together to see whose lantern was the most beautiful. Such a competition would continue for five days.

2014.2.16 Sun. Overcast

In the afternoon, we played *Mary and Max* at the library. Several kids came to watch but left after a while. Only Zhong Ming, teacher Wei and I watched it from the beginning to the end.

We have so many good movies and books here but there aren't many viewers or readers.

Uncle Fan Jingyi who lives opposite to the library bought himself a coffin. When it was made, he put it at his son's yard. And he refused to eat anything anymore.

This morning I sent Na Yingyu the video tapes we shot during the past year. He will edit the documentary. I asked Zhong Ming to double check if he wrote the mailing address correctly, and found that he only wrote half of the address. I was shocked by

such a mistake. He was silent for a long time, and then said, slowly, "I'm still too careless."

Now his job is about to come to an end. I have to say he's not the right person for the job. Or say, he's not the right person to be my assistant. Choosing him to work on the Qiuzhuang Project was a mistake.

He spent a year working at Qiuzhuang. I paid him a whole year's salary. But eventually I decided to pay him an extra month of salary. It seemed cruel to tell him that I would stop paying him. The extra month of salary was not really for him, but for me, to make me feel more at ease.

We took pictures and videos at the wedding of my uncle's second son. In the end, we produced a 26-minute video and made it into 3 discs. After watching it, my uncle came to say that the video seemed a bit short and if it's possible to make it longer. I refused him, mildly. Then he asked if we could print the wedding photos for him. I refused him again, saying that I had given Haitao, his son, all the copies of the photos and he could print them himself.

I felt quite angry at these greedy requirements. Zhong Ming didn't know how to refuse such requests and didn't come to me for advice. It costed us unnecessary money.

I see the selfishness, slyness and greed in people, and I want to run away from these people and this place. I have to give up the vision and ideals hidden in my mind, for what I do is meaningless to them.

I should probably find myself a quiet place, spend some time there and do nothing at all.

Postscript

2014.2.17 Mon. Rainy

I left Qiuzhuang and went back to my home in Suzhou. I left my chilly hometown and went back to the warm Suzhou city.

Walking on the streets in the city, I felt the urban landscape was so boring. During the year I spent in Qiuzhuanag, I took a lot of pictures. But here in the city, though I also had my camera with me, I wanted to shoot nothing.

2014.3.19 Wed. Rainy

Yesterday my mother called, telling me uncle Fan Jingyi who lived opposite the library passed away!

I was quite shocked. I saw him getting weaker day by day but didn't expect he would pass away so quickly. He found someone to make a coffin for him after the Chinese New Year. Looking at that coffin, he lost his appetite.

A few days later, he took a bottle of pills in one evening. He was sent to the hospital the next day and was rescued. The doctor said he was almost killed by an overdose. When he came back home, his legs were swollen and grey liquid secreted from his lower body. His wife said it was neither blood nor pus.

He couldn't eat anything. He told his wife that he didn't belong to the world anymore and he wanted to go to the world where he belonged. At dusk the next day, he passed away.

Last year I took a close-up picture of him. I didn't expect it would be used as his portrait at his funeral so soon.

I always remembered the scene of him listening to some local opera while sitting in front of Sol LeWitt's wall painting. It seemed he was integrated with the word.

2014.3.26 Wed. Sunny

Last night I had a dream that my father's canaries died one after another. My helpless father had to constantly take the dead birds away from the living ones. And the living ones were also dying.

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