

查尔斯,你好!

时间过的很快,转眼间已经进入五月份了。这几天,村子里飘舞着杨絮,像下雪一般。大卡车卷起阵阵尘土,天气干旱,很久没有下雨了。

修路的事情已经确定下来,大路两边的人们纷纷抢在丈量之前搭建新的临时建筑,这样他们就可以获得相对多一点的赔偿。可是大家都知道,这是政府规划的拆迁,赔偿是非常有限的。很多人家刚建起的楼房还没有住过,就要准备拆迁了。整个过程没有人来征求大家的意见,没有人来告诉面临拆迁的人将来要到哪里去。人们只是猜测着赔偿的价钱,猜测着未来的去向。没有答案,他们唯一能做的事情就是多搭建一些临时建筑。我们商店的老板一筹莫展,他将面临失去谋生的商店,失去家。

我邀请村子里的老画师卢道德和我一起来制作 Sol LeWitt 的两幅墙画,他 70 岁了,是村子里唯一的画师,他早年帮人画家具上的图案和古建筑上的花纹,现在靠画神像来谋生。他最初拒绝了我的邀请,他说他非但不喜欢西方的艺术,而且很反感西方的艺术。也许是因为我强调要给他工作报酬,也许是因为我的诚恳,他接受了我的邀请。

我们的合作很愉快,很快就完成了两幅墙画。他在工作中很敬业,也很专业,严格按照 Sol LeWitt 的草稿制作墙画。我们都称呼他为“卢老师”,他很高兴,每天晚上都喝很多酒,我们在饭桌上交换彼此对艺术的经验和态度。他很喜欢我们合作的两幅画,并且有兴趣了解更多的西方艺术。村民们围观我们画画,纷纷表示不能理解这两幅画的意思,有人试着表达自己对这两幅画的理解。他们觉得很好看,却因为不知道它在说什么故事而不能接受它。

很多天过去了,这两幅画上落上一层尘土,和村庄更协调了。人们也已经习惯了它的存在,不再谈论它们了。

我们在图书馆做了“周末电影院”,每周六和周日的下午在图书馆播放两部电影。孩子们不喜欢严肃的艺术电影,他们对动画片很有兴趣。一开始我抱怨他们不懂得欣赏艺术,慢慢的我接受了这个现实,因为我面对的不是这些孩子,而是孩子们成长的环境。我们试着寻找制作精良的动画片给他们看,“周末电影院”的小观众也逐渐多了起来。

来自纽约的诗人、艺术家 Ellen Zweig 来仇庄参观我的项目,她用我们这儿的食材给孩子们做了一次西式野餐。四十多个孩子和很多大人在村外的树林里分享了这些食物,并且用他们自己的方式和 Ellen 交流。大家很高兴,因为孩子们第一次体验了野餐和派对的的味道,第一次用这种方式和一个外国人分享时光。图书馆的孩子们多了起来,大人却越来越少。一方面,他们忙着赚钱而没有时间来图书馆。另一方面,他们觉得读书是孩子们的事情,和他们没有关系。

我父亲对 Ellen 说他有我这样的儿子而自豪,那一刻,一股暖流浸透我的身体。因为父亲从来都不理解我的艺术,也不支持我的艺术事业。我们之间有很深的芥蒂和隔阂,我曾经试着用语言来沟通,但是始终没有成功。这时候,我意识到我回到父亲身边创作的意义,我通过我的行为和言行让父亲体验我的艺术和行为,这

种方式远远胜过说教的方式。因为艺术里中重要的是体验，没有体验而让别人接受我的思想是非常艰难的。同样，村子里的人对我的怀疑和误解也在逐渐消除，他们开始接受图书馆并接受我。因为这些艺术，我开始重新建立起我和村民的关系。

我们把 Ulay/Abramovic 的海报的风格设计的像路边的商品广告一样，它们粗俗、直接而和村庄融为一体。我们把海报张贴在村子里的各个路口和墙面，和那些商业广告混在一起。Ulay/Abramovic 的行为录像开始在村子里王高启的小卖部里展出了，昏暗、杂乱的各种商品混合着食物的味道，和 Ulay/Abramovic 的表演混杂在一起，似乎，那些表演就应该属于这儿。商店的老板王高启是离这些录像最近的人，他每天都在琢磨这些表演的意义。因为录像里有裸体的表演，村子里的一个妇女无法接受，她觉得这是伤风败俗的行为。王高启解决的方法是当这个妇女来购物的时候，他就把电视关掉，等她走了，他再打开电视。人们不断的问我这些行为是什么意思，他们不能理解为什么这是艺术，并且希望我能把作品要表达的意思写在海报上。

因为我印刷了很多 Andy Warhol 的《毛泽东》，看到 Andy Warhol 把毛泽东的脸涂成不同的颜色，父亲开始紧张起来，他担心当局会以我侮辱领导人的名义来找我的麻烦。同样，印刷厂也非常紧张，他们不许我写印刷厂的名称，不许我拍摄印刷的过程。我知道，我们生活在共产党领导的国家，长期苛严的政治环境使人们对自由充满了恐惧，为了保护自己，他们已经形成了自我审查的习惯。

我很喜欢 Andy Warhol 创作的《毛泽东》，我打算把这些《毛泽东》送进村子里的每个家庭。出乎我们的意料，很多人不喜欢这三幅肖像，他们觉得颜色很难看，他们无法接受蓝色的和红色的毛泽东。这真的很有意思，同样的一幅肖像，加上漂亮的颜色人们就不接受了；同样的一幅画，在西方和在中国，被欢迎的程度却是如此不同。

我知道，任何新事物的接受都是需要一个过程的，我在用这些艺术挑战人们的审美和心理界限。我相信，人们会接受这三幅《毛泽东》的。

一个记者问我艺术是否能改变社会时，我说：“我觉得艺术在现实面前是非常渺小和无力的，是利益在催发这个社会的活力和进程。我不奢望艺术能改变我的村庄，我只是希望这些艺术能让人们的生活多一点乐趣，多一点美好的记忆。”

保重！

李牧

2013. 5. 23

Dear Charles,

Time flies! it's May now. These days, the seeds of the poplar tree are flying in the air like snow. It's dry and hasn't rained for a long time. The passing trucks throw up dust all the way.

The road repair plan was confirmed. The villagers are speeding up the constructions of temporary buildings before the evaluation of their houses so as to get more compensation. This plan was launched by the government. The villagers know clearly that the compensations are very limited. Some households just built up their new houses and now are facing the demolition of their houses. The government never sent people to solicit their opinions or told them where they could go when the houses are pulled down. People were just speculating about the compensations and wondering about their future. There is no clear response from the government. All that they can do is to build more buildings for more compensation. The grocery's owner Wang Gaoqi is worried. He is facing the loss of his grocery and house.

I invited Lu Daode, the old painter in my village, to join me to paint the two Wall Drawings of Sol LeWitt. He is seventy now. He is the only painter in the village. He used to paint the patterns on the furniture and ancient buildings. Now he makes a living by drawing the statue of Buddha. At first he refused me. He said he didn't like western art. But eventually he accepted my invitation, maybe it's because I emphasized that I would pay him or he was moved by my sincerity.

We cooperated very well and finished the wall paintings very quickly. He was very professional and devoted to his work. He strictly followed Sol LeWitt's sketches and made the copy. We all call him "master Lu". He was very happy those days. Every night we drank a lot. We exchanged our attitudes towards art and our art experience. He liked the two wall paintings we co-worked on and started showing interest in western art. The villagers gathered around the two paintings but couldn't understand them. Some people tried to express their interpretation of the two paintings. Though they thought the paintings were beautiful, they couldn't accept them because they couldn't read a story out of the paintings.

The two wall paintings are covered with dust now, which fits into the village even better. People have gotten used to them and no longer discuss them.

We held the activity called "Weekend Cinema " in A Library. We played two films on Saturday and Sunday afternoon. The children do not like serious art film. They are more interested in cartoons. At first I complained that they didn't know how to appreciate art, but gradually I started to accept the fact. Because it's their living environment that leads to their ignorance of art. I tried to find good animated films for them. We have more and more children in the "Weekend Cinema"

Ellen Zweig, artist and poet from New York came to visit me. She made a western picnic for the children by using the ingredients here. More than 40 children came to the picnic. Some parents were also present. The children communicated with Ellen in their own ways. The children were very happy, because it's their first time to take part in a picnic party and spend time with a foreigner.

More children came to A Library, but fewer adults visited it. On the one hand, they are busy making money and have no time to visit the library. On the other hand, they think it's children's business to learn, not theirs.

My father told Ellen that he was proud of me. When I heard that I felt a warm feeling rushing through my body. My father never understood my art nor supported my art career. There is deep misunderstanding between him and me. I once tried to communicate with him, but it didn't work. My father is experiencing my art creation by watching me work and listening to me. To experience art is very important. It's very difficult to make people accept my ideas without involving them in that art experience. Their doubts and misunderstanding of me is gradually gone. They started to accept the library. Because of the art works, I am building up a new relationship with the villagers.

The poster about Ulay/Abramovic's performance art looks like those commercial advertisements we often see on the road. I designed it on purpose to make it look rough and direct, which actually matches the village. We pasted the posters on each intersection and on the walls, having them mixed with those commercial advertisements. The video of Ulay/Abramovic's performance art was played in Wang Gaoqi's grocery. Their performance was shown in this dim room where there was the smell in the air and goods arranged in disorder. To me, this place is the best place to show the video. That performance art seems to belong here. Wang Gaoqi, the owner of the grocery, watched it almost everyday and he was thinking about its meaning. There is a woman who can't stand the performance cause there was a nude scene. So Wang Gaoqi turned off the video until she left. He turned it on after she left. The villagers kept asking me what's performance art. They cannot understand why it's art. They suggest that I write down the meaning on the posters.

I printed many Andy Warhol's Mao portraits. My father became nervous when seeing the Mao portraits printed in various colors. He was worried that it would get me in trouble because the government might think I was insulting the former leader. At the same time, the printing house got nervous too. They didn't allow their names to appear on the posters and didn't let me film the printing process. I know we live under the leadership of the Communist party. The strict political environment made people fear freedom. To protect themselves, they've formed the habit of self-censorship.

I liked Andy Warhol's Mao series. I planned to give them to every family in the village. To my surprise, many people didn't like the three portraits. They thought

the colors were ugly. They couldn't accept Mao's face in red and blue. It's very interesting that people don't like them after bright colors were added to the picture. But these portraits of Mao are so popular with Western people. The reactions to these Mao portraits in Western countries and China are so different. I know it takes time to get people to accept a new thing. I'm challenging their aesthetic view and their psychological limits. I believe they will eventually appreciate the three Andy Warhol's Mao portraits.

A journalist asked me if art can change society. I said: " Art is so small and powerless. It's profit that is driving society forward. I don't expect that art can change my village. I just hope that these art works can bring more fun to their lives and leave them some beautiful memories.

All my best!

Li Mu
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