

查尔斯，你好！

在我写这封信前，我把我之前写给你的七封信重新看了一遍。在写第一封信的时候，我们的项目还没有正式开始，那时候我怀着忐忑和激动的心情说：不管这个项目有多么复杂和庞大，它都是关于人的，都不应该失去人的温度。而现在，一年多时间过去了，我完成了村庄里的工作，完成了 10 件作品的复制工作。这时候，我已经不再担心这个艺术项目是否会失去人的温度，因为有很多人参与进来，有太多人的故事。而我会问我自己第一封信里的问题：通过这一年的工作，我到底收获了什么？我找到自己从事艺术的方向和目的了吗？

仇庄的冬天特别寒冷，气温虽然不如中国的北方更低，可是这里没有任何取暖设施，甚至屋都不生炉子，人们取暖的方法是穿上更厚的棉衣。我早早的就将母亲为我做的棉裤穿上了，戴上了厚厚的棉手套，每天坚持锻炼身体，为的是防止冻疮的复发。春节后下了一场很大的雪，这是一场我期待已久的大雪，大雪覆盖了随处可见的垃圾和混乱，整个村庄成为一个童话般的世界。大雪过后就是严寒，很不幸，我手上的冻疮还是复发了。

卡尔-安德鲁 (Carl Andre) 的“25 块钢板 (Twenty-fifth steel Cardinal)”的装置是在春节前完成的。我去了县城钢材市场寻找材料，那里到处都是钢板，堆积在地上。一个工人按我的要求把一块大的钢板切割成 25 块，老板和工人都很好奇我如何把这些钢板做成艺术，我说：我把它们铺在地上，作品就完成了。

本来计划把这 25 块钢板铺在一个叔叔家的新房子客厅里，可是他们家的新房子迟迟没有装修使用，所以我只好将它放置在我家的院子里。我父亲无法理解为什么这些钢板是一件艺术作品，因为它既不美观，也不实用。尽管如此，他和母亲还是很认真的帮我完成了这件作品。地面不平，他们就先在地面上铺了一层沙，然后再把钢板铺在上面。摆完了，父亲发现每块钢板上的肌理都不一样，他就重新摆放它们的位置，使钢板上肌理看起来有一定的秩序。

看我拍完了照，他开始一个个的把他的鸟笼提了出来，每块钢板上放一个鸟笼，一共摆了 25 个鸟笼。他点了一颗烟，坐下来欣赏它们。这时候，他满意了，脸上洋溢着笑容问我：这样算是一件艺术作品吗？我说：是的，这是一件装置艺术作品。

春节的时候，他发现了一个新的功能，如果把鞭炮放在钢板上燃放，声音就会因为钢板的坚硬而更加响亮，同时，还会在钢板上炸出新的肌理来。几场雨过后，钢板开始生锈了，从原来的青灰色变成土红色，最后变成了土黄色。

我把理查德-朗 (Richard Long) 的“树枝圆圈 (wood circle, 1977)”放在了项目的最后来制作，不知道什么原因，我总是觉得这件作品很难做。我最初选中的一块空地被主人搭上了棚子，我就一直等着那块地方空出来，可是一直都等不到机会。我不得不考虑在村外来实施这个作品，可是，所有的地方都被农民种上了树和庄稼。终于，我在村外河堤上找到一块空地，之所以空着，是因为种在那里的庄稼总是不能存活。它紧邻着大河，地面平坦，视野开阔。我想，理查德-朗的作品应该产生于这样的环境吧。

我找了我的婶子和我的父母亲来帮忙，我们用了一个下午把树枝整理出来，这些树枝来自于春节前砍倒的三棵杨树，还有一些修剪下来的苹果树枝。第二天，我们用了整整一个上午，就把这个“树枝圆圈”给完成了。河滩上有很多残雪，树枝铺在雪上面，随着雪慢慢融化，树枝就直接铺在地面上了。

这个树枝组成的圆圈紧邻着村庄，似乎就是某个村民的劳动成果，和这个环境是如此的协调。不同的是这个圆圈是极度规整的，而村庄是凌乱的，在村庄里很难看到这样规整的几何形状。我们都很担心会有村民把这个作品带到家里当柴禾烧掉，于是我每天都会去看看它是否完好无损。我希望它能一直呆在那里，经历春夏秋冬。

我的父母都很开心，因为通过这一年的工作，所有的作品都顺利完成了。这一年来，尽管他们常常不认可我的工作，对我的工作带来干扰，可是在整个项目中，付出最多的还是他们。他们给予了我无私的帮助和支持。

一年下来，我们拍摄了 350 个小时的录像素材。最终，我们还是决定用日记体的方式来剪辑这些素材——由每天一个章节来组成整个影片。那颖禹和我达成一个共识，就是用我的日记和钟鸣拍摄的录像素材相结合，呈现出一年中进入我们视野的人和事件，呈现出这个村庄一年的时间。这不是一篇离奇的小说，不是一首抒情的诗歌，而是一篇散文。这样，就避免了讲述一个单一的故事，而是让进入我们生活中的人都有表达的机会。因为在这一年的时间里，留在我的印象中的是这些不同的人，他们在我的世界里不再是一个笼统的“村民”，而是一个个不同个性的人。

一年前，我回到村庄的时候，看着空荡荡的灰色村庄，我的内心忐忑，我不知道该怎么面对即将到来的困难，也不知道该怎么面对人们的愚昧、自私和贪婪。我的肩上就像背了一个很大的口袋，口袋是空的，我担心没有东西可以装进去；一年后，我站在村口，看着路边那些五颜六色的墙画和装置，看着我熟悉的面孔，我却有些茫然和伤感。我肩上的口袋里装满了东西，沉甸甸的，我不知道接下来我该往哪里去。刹那之间，我对这片土地，对村里的人，无论是慷慨的人还是自私的人，都充满了感激之情。

这一年，我离开了上海，离开了那些艺术讲座、开幕式以及艺术家之间的讨论。虽然这样，我依然保持了一个很投入的工作状态，并且因此而和更广泛的一个艺术世界保持着联系。而当这个项目的工作接近尾声的时候，我却有些无所适从，我不知道接下来我要做什么。原来，我选择的艺术家的道路就是这样一个永远也不知道未来的工作。七年前我决绝的离开我工作的艺术学院，那是因为我无法忍受什么都是已知的生活。而现在，当我面对完全未知的时候，我居然有些恐惧了？可是，这就是我要选择的艺术家的道路啊！

目前我和我的助手暂时离开了村庄，图书馆还在继续，由魏老师来管理。只是，村头上的大桥已经开始动工，估计过不了多久，就要开始拆迁修路了。如果这样，我们的图书馆可能要等路修好了，再继续寻找新的空间，继续开放。昨天晚上我做了一个梦：魏老师坐在我的电动自行车后座上，我们从一条柏油路转到了一条崎岖的乡间小道，而我的电动自行车上只有一格电了，我不得不艰难的蹬着自行车前行。

我母亲说当她回顾这一年的时候，她觉得害怕，我知道我给她带来了太多的麻烦。我意识到我必须要离开一下，还给她一段安静的时间。而我父亲依然关心我的这些作品是否能卖钱，我很肯定的告诉他：肯定能卖钱，而且会很值钱。

李牧

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Dear Charles,

I just reviewed the 7 letters I wrote to you earlier before I write this letter. When I send you the first letter, this project had not even started. With excitement and worries, I expressed the idea that no matter how complicated and broad this project will be, it must keep the “temperature” from people. This whole project should be concentrated on people and their stories. It’s been one year since I discussed this idea with you, and I have finished most of my work on this project in the village. (I copied ten pieces of artworks from Van Abbemuseum, and presented them in the village.) I no longer worry about the problem if I lost people’s “temperature” or not. Because so many people participated in this project in different ways, and they brought so many stories into this project. And I began to re-ponder on the questions I asked myself in the first letter: what did I gain from this project during past year’s work? And have I found my direction and goal in my career?

Winter in Qiuzhuang is extremely cold. Though the weather here is better than it is in the North, we don’t have heating system. The only way people can do to make themselves warmer is to wear as many clothes as they can. I put on the cotton trousers my mother made for me and wear cotton gloves to protect my hands from chilblain. After the Chinese New Year, there was a very heavy snow, which I have been expecting for a long time. All the trashes and other chaotic scenes were covered by the snow, and the village turned into a place where we can only experience in a fairy tale. Unfortunately, it got even colder after the snow began to melt, and my hands are full of chilblain again.

I finished Carl Andre’s *Twenty-fifth Steel Cardinal* before the Spring Festival. I went to the steel market searching for the proper material I could use for this installation. One of the worker cut a whole piece of steel into 25 squares under my request. Both the owner and workers of that store were very curious about how I was about to make those pieces into an artwork. I told them I will just put them on the ground, then it is done, and art is created.

I planed to put this installation in the living room of one of my uncle’s newly decorated house. But he could not finish the decoration work by then. Thus, I had to put it in the courtyard of my father’s house. He couldn’t understand why these steel cardinals can be seen as art, as in his opinion, it’s neither beautiful nor useful. However, both my mother and he gave me hands on the installation of this work. The floor was not so flat, so I first put a layer of sand on it to make it evener. On the sand, I put all the steel cardinals and arranged them according to their texture on the surface.

After I took some pictures, my father started to take all his birdcage out of the room and placed them on the steel cardinals. 25 birdcages on 25 steel cardinals. He lighted a cigarette and enjoyed his work for a while. At that time, he was satisfied. He asked me with a smile on his face: “Is this art?”. I answered: “Yes, it is installation art”.

During the Spring Festival, he found an interesting function of the cardinals: it can make the sound of fireworks louder and clearer. On the other side, the

fireworks would leave some marks on the surface and create new textures for the steel.

After several rains, the steel became rusty, and finally turned into khaki from its original color blue gray, and then earthly red.

Richard Long's Wood Circle was arranged at the end of Qiuzhuang project. I don't know why I made this arrangement, but I think this work is tough to accomplish. I picked an empty space for this work when I started to think about it. But someone put up a tent there, and I could not wait any more for him to spare it. So I had to find another place outside of the village, where every inch was covered by crops and trees. Finally I got an available land on a bank of a big river. For the reason that all the crops couldn't survive there, it was left empty for ages. I guess this kind of environment is also where Richard Long created his work.

My aunt and my parents helped me with Richard Long's Wood Circle. We worked for the whole afternoon to collect and sort out all these brunches from poplars and apple trees. We finished the work next morning. There were a lot of snow on the bank, so we placed the brunches on the snow directly. As the snow melted away, all the brunches were then on the ground.

The Wood Circle was installed somewhere close to the village, but outside of it. As a result, it seems like this was a presentation of the work by all the people in my village. However, the brunches are organized in a very orderly way, whereas the village looks messy and chaotic. We were worried that some people would take those brunches away and use them as firewood. So I went there everyday to check if Wood Circle was still there in its original shape. I was hoping it would stay there going through spring, summer, autumn till winter.

My parents are really happy that I can finish all the works in this one year. Even though, their misunderstandings and confusions bothered me constantly, they are among the ones who helped me the most during the whole process. They offered me the most generous support without any condition.

We shoot 350 hours of video tapes from the 13 months and we decided to edit these video materials in the style of diary: one day is one chapter, all the chapters consist the whole documentary. As I agreed with my friend and the editor, Na Yingyu, we will present the people who have participated and their interesting stories to a wider audiences, based on the documentary as well as other videos taken by my assistant Zhong Min. These materials will tell people what happened in the village during last year. It's not a breathtaking novel or lyric poem. It's a prose. In this way, we can avoid to just tell a simple story. Instead, we will be able to give everyone a chance to express themselves. They are not a group of villagers with the same tags on them, but individuals with distinguishable personalities which make every one of them special and different others.

A year ago, my mind was full of fears and uncertainties when I came back to visit my gray-colored village. I didn't know what's going to happen for the coming year and how could I possibly handle all the difficulties and problems I could not even anticipate. Either did I have the idea on how to deal with people's ignorance, selfishness and greediness. It is like having a huge empty bag on my shoulders, and I was concerned that I could not put anything in that bag in a year. One year later, I stood on the village's road, and I looked at these colorful wall drawings and installations, and people I am getting really familiar with. This feeling of lost and sadness conquered me. The empty bag now is filled with ideas and stories, and it is so heavy, but I just don't know where should I go next. All of a sudden, I am full of gratefulness in my heart, to the village, to the people, whether they are generous or selfish .

For the whole year, I stayed away from Shanghai and all those art talks, lectures and debates there. However, I still managed to keep a good work status and built a relationship with a wider art world. But when I was about to finish this project in the village, this sentiment that I could not find my way next came back to me again. I realized that this is how my art career will be like: a career where you can never know for sure what's coming next. I left my job at an art institute only because I cannot bear the feeling of knowing exactly what's going to happen in 5 or 10 years. But now, when I am faced with uncertainties ahead, I am slightly frightened. But, this is what I chose, this is my art career!

Now, both my assistant and I have left Qiuzhuang. A Library is still open in the village and managed by Mr. Wei. The dismantlement work of the bridge near the entrance of the village is about to start. Soon enough, they will begin to maintain the road, and A Library will have to close. We need to find another place after the maintenance, and re-open the library.

I had a dream last night: Mr. Wei was sitting on the back of my electric bicycle, we traveled all the way from a flat asphalt road to a bumpy country road. The electric bicycle was running out of power, so I had to ride it very difficultly at the front.

My mother also told me that she was faced with fears all the year long. I know I caused lots of trouble for her, and it is time I leave her and give her a period of peace. My father is still wondering if I can make some money from works of this project. I told him affirmatively that they are going to make lots of money, they are very valuable.

All my best.

Li Mu

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