

徐冰

回顧展

Xu Bing: A Retrospective

1.25-4.20.2014

策展人 王嘉驥 Curator Chia Chi Jason WANG

回顧展是一個大題目，對有些人適合對有些人不適合。把一個人的作品放在一起看時，有些人的作品會相互抵消，有些人的作品之間卻有相互襯托和「注釋」的作用。回顧展如果不給人更多關於這位藝術家有價值的東西，觀眾就會不滿足；原來這個藝術家了不起的作品，還是那些我已經知道的。當然，我相信我的這次展覽不會是這種結果。

活了大半輩子，一直都在做創作。回頭看這些作品，它們像鏡子，照見自己；原來我對這類東西感興趣，這樣做藝術，是這樣一個人。後來作品開始引起關注，藝評家或自己就會根據過去生活背景的蛛絲馬跡，找出其藝術方法或風格來源的證據。原來一個藝術家的方法與風格都不是預先計畫的結果，它帶有宿命性。屬於你的風格你不需要也丟不掉，不屬於你的你拼了命也得不到。在工作室中處理一個型，是銳一點還是鈍一點，是選這塊材料還是那塊材料，所有這些細節的決定，都是由你這個人的性格、修為、敏銳度所左右的。如果你著急成功，型的處理或作品的尺寸就會過份一點；你要是想通過藝術，向世人炫耀或掩蓋一點什麼，都會被作品顯露無疑。這是藝術唯有的誠實，也是我們對藝術信賴的依據。

藝術家像是作品與社會文化之間的傳導體，導體的品質決定作品的品質，這一點對誰都是平等的。每個藝術家把自己特殊的部分通過作品帶入藝術界，但客觀上卻是，有些被認可，有些始終不被認可。這取決於你帶入的東西，是否是優質的；是藝術系統中缺失的；是大於藝術界現有思維範圍的；對推進人們的認識是有啟發的，總之是否能通過一種特有的藝術手段給人們帶到一個新的地方。在這裡「特有的藝術手段」是重要的，這是藝術家工作的核心。你要說的話是過去人沒有說過的，在現有的詞庫中還沒有，你必須找到一種新的方法去說，從而擴展了舊有的藝術領域。

藝術有各種層面，上述是我追求的。而我作為這樣一個「不得不接受的天生性格」和成長背景的藝術家，有什麼呢？依靠什麼來創作呢？現在看來，對我的藝術創造有幫助的，是民族性格中的內省，文化基因中的哲學觀與智慧，和我們這代在中國大陸長大的人，整體付出的有關社會主義制度嘗試的方法與經驗，以及學習西方的經驗。這些優質與盲點的部分交織在一起的，構成了我們特有的養料。這些與西方價值觀不盡相同的內容，比如敬畏自然的態度；與自然配合的態度；和諧中庸的態度；文藝為大眾的態度。這些好東西，幾乎還沒有機會在以往的人類文明建設中發揮應有的作用，但顯然它是人類文明走到今天需要補充的東西。但這些東西怎麼用？似乎我們又缺少如何使用它的經驗，因為過去的一二百年裡我們只積累了學習西方的經驗。我們傳統中有價值的部分，在今天必須被啟動才能生效，這是我希望人們從這個展覽中看到的。

Retrospectives are a big deal. They work for some but not for everyone. When seen together at one place, the works of some artists may cancel out one another, while for other artists, their works can set off and “comment on” one another. If a retrospective does not provide more valuable insights into an artist’s work, viewers will not be satisfied; they will think that they already know the work that the artist is famous for. Of course, I don’t think this will be the case for my show.

I have created art most of my life. When I look back on my works, I see them as a mirror that reflects myself: the sort of things I am interested in, how I make art, what kind of person I am. When an artist’s work begins to attract attention, critics or the artist will look for clues for the source of his artistic methods or style from his background. Actually, the methods and style of an artist are not preplanned, but have something to do with destiny. If it is a style that belongs to you, you cannot get rid of it. If it doesn’t belong to you, you cannot acquire it no matter how hard you try. Modelling a form in the studio, making it sharper or less sharp, choosing this or that material – all these decisions about the details are determined by your personality, training and sensibility. If you are keen to succeed, you might make the handling of the form or the dimensions of the work a bit over the top. If you want to show off or hide anything through art, it will show up in the work. This is the only honest thing about art and the basis of our trust in art.

Artists are like a conductor between the artwork, society and culture. The quality of the work depends on the quality of the conductor. This is the same for everyone. Each artist brings what is unique about him into the world of art through his work. But the objective truth is that some will be recognized, but others may never be recognized. This depends on whether the things you bring in are invaluable: whether they are missing in the artistic system, whether they go beyond the existing thinking of the art world, whether they bring about people’s greater understanding - in short, whether they can take people to a new place through a distinctive artistic means. Here, “distinctive artistic means” is important. It is the core of an artist’s work. You have to say something that nobody has said before, that does not yet exist in the present vocabulary. You must find a new way to say it in order to push the boundaries of art.

Art has many aspects. The above is what I try to achieve. As an artist born with “a personality that I have to accept” and with such a background, what have I got? What is the basis of my art? As I see it, what helps me in my artistic creation is the national introspective character, the philosophy and wisdom in my cultural gene, as well as the experiments and experience with the socialist system, and things learned from western experience by my generation growing up in mainland China. The strengths and the blind spots combine to form our distinctive nutrients. They are not entirely the same as western values, and include such attitudes as venerating nature, adapting to nature, stressing harmony and the middle road, and art serving the masses. It seems that these approaches have not played a sufficient role in the development of human civilization in the past. But obviously, they are things that human civilization now needs to acquire. However, how should we make use of them? It seems that we lack the experience to use them, since we have only learned from western experience over the past one to two hundred years. The things that are valuable in our tradition can only become effective if we activate them. This is what I hope people will see in this exhibition.

藝術家簡歷

徐冰祖籍浙江溫嶺，1955年生於重慶，長於北京。1977年考取北京中央美術學院版畫系，1981年畢業留校任教，1987年獲中央美術學院碩士學位。1990年接受美國威斯康辛大學邀請，以榮譽藝術家身份移居美國。2007年返回中國任中央美術學院副院長。作品曾在紐約大都會博物館、倫敦大英博物館、倫敦V&A博物館、法國羅浮宮博物館、紐約現代美術館、西班牙索菲亞女王國家美術館、美國華盛頓沙可樂國家美術館、紐約新美術館、西班牙米羅基金會美術館、捷克國家美術館、德國路維希美術館、臺北市立美術館等展出。曾受邀參加威尼斯雙年展、雪梨雙年展、聖保羅雙年展、臺北雙年展等國際展。

1989年獲得中國國家教委「霍英東教育基金會年輕教員科研和教學」一等獎。1999年美國麥克阿瑟「天才獎」(MacArthur Fellowship)給予獎助，肯定其「原創性、創造力、個人方向，連同他對社會以及在書法和版畫藝術上的貢獻力。」2003年獲頒第14屆日本福岡亞洲文化獎。2004年獲得首屆威爾士國際視覺藝術獎(Artes Mundi)。同年《美國藝術》雜誌評為15位國際藝壇年度最受注目人物之一。2007年美國南方版畫家國際協會(SGC International)授予「版畫藝術終身成就獎」，肯定「(徐冰)運用文字、語言和書籍，為版畫和藝術界之間的對話，創造意義深長的影響」。2010年獲美國哥倫比亞大學授予人文學榮譽博士學位。2013年加拿大艾米莉·卡爾大學授予藝術和設計榮譽博士。

作品相關出版包括：《天書》編入美國1997年版世界藝術史教科書《藝術的過去與未來》(*Art Past - Art Present*) (Prentice Hall, Abrams出版社)及2001年美國權威藝術教科書《加德納世界藝術史》(第11版)(*Gardner's Art Through the Ages*)；美國史密森學會出版《徐冰的藝術》(Brita Erickson 著，2006)；美國普林斯頓大學出版社出版《持續性/轉型—以文字為圖像：徐冰的藝術》(2006)；中國人民大學出版社出版《徐冰：煙草計畫》(巫鴻編著，2006)；英國伯納德·夸里奇有限公司(Bernard Quaritch Ltd and contributors 2009)出版《創作天書的道路》(*Tianshu: Passages in the Making of a Book*) (約翰·凱利等著，2009)；美國紐約大學出版社出版《徐冰與中國當代藝術》(曹星源主編，2011)；美國維吉尼亞大學出版社出版《煙草計畫》(John B. Ravenal 等著，2011)；英國倫敦Albion出版社出版《徐冰》(Reiko Tomii 等著，2011)。



Artist Biography

Xu Bing traces his family roots to Wenling, in China's Zhejiang Province. He was born in Chongqing in 1955 and grew up in Beijing. In 1977 he entered the printmaking department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing (CAFA), where he completed his bachelor's degree in 1981 and stayed on as an instructor, earning his MFA in 1987. In 1990, he moved to the United States to serve as resident artist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In 2007 Xu accepted the position of vice president of CAFA. His work has been exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the British Museum, London; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Louvre, Paris; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid; the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington DC; the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; the Joan Miro Foundation, Spain; the National Gallery of Prague; the Museum Ludwig, Cologne; and Taipei Fine Arts Museum. Xu Bing has also shown at several international biennial exhibitions such as the 45th and 51st Venice Biennales, the Biennale of Sydney, the Sao Paulo Biennial, and the Taipei Biennial.

In 1989, Xu Bing was honored with the Huo Yingdong Education Foundation Award from the China National Education Association for his contribution to art education. In 1999, Xu was the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship in recognition of his "capacity to contribute importantly to society, particularly in printmaking and calligraphy." In 2003 Xu Bing was awarded the Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize. In 2004 he won the first Wales International Visual Art Prize, Artes Mundi, and he was featured as one of *Art in America* magazine's 15 top "People in Review." In 2007, the Southern Graphics Council awarded Xu Bing their lifetime achievement award in recognition that his "use of text, language and books has impacted the dialogue of the print and art worlds in significant ways." Xu Bing received a Doctor of Humane Letters from Columbia University in 2010, and an honorary doctorate from Canada's Emily Carr University of Art and Design in 2013.

Publications treating Xu Bing's art include *Art Past – Art Present* (1997) and *Gardner's Art Through the Ages* (11th edition). In 2006, the Smithsonian Institution published *The Art of Xu Bing* (by Brita Erickson), Princeton University Press published *Persistence/Transformation: Text as Image in the Art of Xu Bing*, and China Renmin University Press published *Xu Bing: Tobacco Project*. In 2009 London bookseller Bernard Quaritch published *Tianshu: Passages in the Making of a Book*. In 2011 State University of New York Press published *Xu Bing and Contemporary Chinese Art: Cultural and Philosophical Reflections* (Tsao Hsingyuan, ed.), University of Virginia Press published *Xu Bing: Tobacco Project* (John B. Ravenal et. al.), and Albion published *Xu Bing* (Reiko Tomii).

徐冰回憶自己在幼年時期，母親因北京大學圖書館學的工作繁忙，經常將他「關」在書庫裡。或因此故，他日後走上藝術創作的道路，內容卻一直與「書」有著不解之緣。

1950年代以後，中共厲行文字改造，漢字簡化成為運動。也因此，徐冰的成長過程經歷了「一批批新字的公佈、舊字的廢除，對新字的再更改和廢除，對舊字的再恢復使用。」此一對待文字的特殊現象和概念，在徐冰心中種下了因子——也就是「文字是可以『玩』的。」

在中央美術學院學習版畫和教學時期，徐冰除了將版畫視為繪畫的表現，也從中國傳統拓印和印刷術入手，摸索版畫成為前衛和當代藝術媒介的可能。版畫的模組性、過程性、複數性，以及轉印特質，成了徐冰實踐觀念藝術的基本法碼。1980年代後期的《五個複數系列》、《天書》、《鬼打牆》三個計畫，都是徐冰在1990年赴美之前的重要大作，更是奠定他踏入美國藝壇之後，很快受到矚目與肯定的代表作。

旅美之後，對語言和文字敏感的徐冰，一度質問東西方文化是否可能經由語文的轉譯，達到真正的溝通。不少以中英文轉譯為題的作品在1990年代前期完成，有些甚至影射中西文化交流的荒謬情境。《A, B, C...》、《My Book》、《一個轉換案例的研究》、《文化動物》、《轉話》都是這一時期之作。從難以溝通的衝突感，到交流介面的研創，徐冰也在1990年代期間發展出《英文方塊字書法》，不但設計了一套教學法，更將展覽場轉換為教室。中國書法和英文在此邂逅交會，形成耐人尋味的對話。美國著名的麥克阿瑟「天才獎」也因為看到徐冰的「原創性、創造力、個人方向，連同他對社會以及在書法和版畫藝術上的貢獻力」，特別於1999年給予獎助。

1990年代末期以來，徐冰更頻繁地受邀在國際間展出，也有很多機會因應各機構的主題策劃，結合其場域的文化或歷史特殊性，進行與在地對話的創作。《文字寫生》、《煙草計畫》、《背後的故事》、《魔毯》、《芥子園山水卷》和《漢字的性格》都是因這類機緣而發展的作品。而徐冰在構思作品時，總不忘從自己的文化背景出發，與該地的語境或脈絡互動，藉此激盪新的藝術動能和討論。

面對21世紀全球化時代的人類社會及其處境，徐冰也表達富於普遍性的個人關懷。《何處惹塵埃？》以美國2001年911事件為楔子，向禪宗求借智慧之鏡，反照當代世界景況。已經發展10年，龐大且繼續中的《地書》，則反映了他對人類當代——甚至未來——語文發展新動向的持續觀照，亦堪稱徐冰個人知其不可而為之的「巴別塔」計畫。

此次的「徐冰：回顧展」集結了徐冰自1975年以來，長達40年的重要代表作，更是他在國際上的第一個大型回顧展。徐冰堅信，傳統必須激活，才可能在當代形成意義。他更期許中國文化界「用中國的思想方法、文化態度、世界觀，結合其他優秀文化，尋找新的文化方式。」而這樣的精神與視野，也充分體現在本展當中。

When he was a child, Xu Bing recalls, his mother was so busy working at the Peking University Library Department that she would often “lock” him in the book storeroom. Perhaps this is why, when he later became an artist, the subjects of his works would always be closely bound to books.

In the 1950s the Chinese communists launched a campaign to reform the writing system, and the simplification of Chinese characters became a political movement. While he was growing up, Xu heard “new words constantly announced, and old words abolished. New words would be revised again and abolished, and old words would be reinstated.” This special experience regarding the treatment of written language laid the seeds of a thought in Xu’s mind: “Words are something you can play with.”

During his years as both a student and a teacher of printmaking at the China Central Academy of Fine Arts, Xu not only viewed printmaking as a form of painting, but also got involved in traditional Chinese inscription rubbing and typography, exploring the possibility that printmaking could be a medium of avant-garde and contemporary art. The modular, procedural, multiplicitous nature of printmaking and its ability to transfer impressions became Xu’s basic units of measurement for executing conceptual art. Three projects of the 1980s that Xu completed prior to embarking for the United States – *Five Series of Repetitions*, *Book from the Sky*, and *Ghosts Pounding the Wall* – were major representative works that laid the foundation for his rapid rise in the American art world in the 1990s.

After moving to the United States, the linguistically sensitive Xu Bing for a time questioned whether the Orient and the Occident could actually engage in language transference and achieve genuine communication. In the early 1990s he did several art projects revolving around the theme of Chinese-English translation, some even alluding to the absurdities of cultural exchange between China and the West. *A, B, C...*, *My Book*, *A Case Study of Transference*, *Cultural Animal*, and *Telephone* were all works from this period. But later in the 1990s, Xu transitioned from expressing communicative dissonance to creating interfaces for

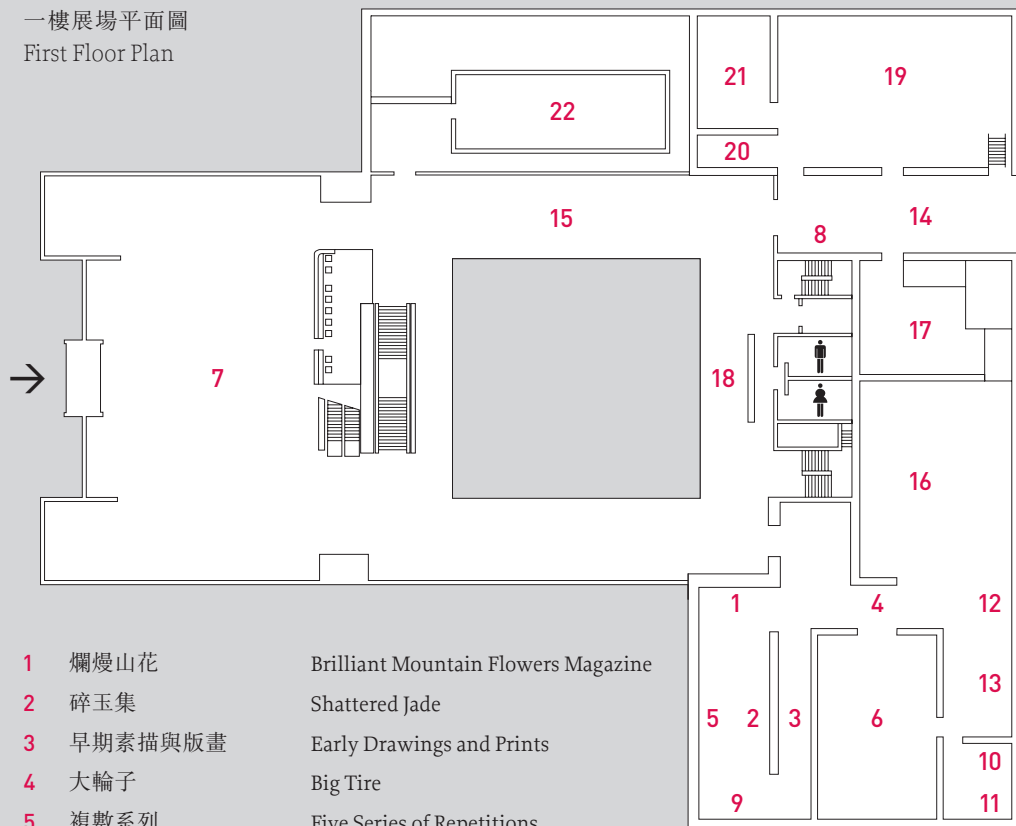
exchange. His *Square Word Calligraphy* was an intriguing convergence of Chinese calligraphy and English, as a part of which he not only designed a set of teaching methods, but also converted the exhibition space into a classroom. In 1999 the prestigious MacArthur Foundation gave Xu a “genius” fellowship in recognition of his “originality, creativity, self-direction, and capacity to contribute importantly to society, particularly in printmaking and calligraphy.”

Since the late 1990s, Xu has been invited to take part in international exhibitions with increasing frequency, often creating works that respond to a specific curatorial theme or engage the site in a dialogue incorporating its unique cultural and historical features. *Landscript*, *Tobacco Project*, *Background Story*, *Magic Carpet*, *Mustard Seed Garden Landscape Scroll*, and *The Character of Characters* all developed from such site-specific encounters. Yet when conceptualizing his artworks, Xu never forgets to interact with the local context from the perspective of his own cultural background, stirring up new artistic momentum and discussion.

In the age of globalization of the 21st century, Xu also expresses personal feelings of universal concern for human society. *Where Does the Dust Itself Collect?* takes the events of September 11, 2001 as its springboard and reflects on the current state of world affairs through the lens of Buddhist wisdom. *Book from the Ground* is an enormous project, ongoing for a decade now, that muses on the new paths which contemporary – even future – human language is following, in what may be a knowingly futile attempt at a personal “Tower of Babel” project.

“Xu Bing: A Retrospective” brings together major representative works spanning 40 years, from 1975 to the present. It is his first large-scale international retrospective solo exhibition. Xu firmly believes that tradition must be reinvigorated if it is to be meaningful in the current age. He hopes that the Chinese cultural world will “use the Chinese way of thought, cultural orientation and worldview while absorbing from other admirable cultures in search of a new approach to culture.” This spirit and vision is fully embodied in this exhibition.

一樓展場平面圖
First Floor Plan



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|----|--------------|---|
| 1 | 爛漫山花 | Brilliant Mountain Flowers Magazine |
| 2 | 碎玉集 | Shattered Jade |
| 3 | 早期素描與版畫 | Early Drawings and Prints |
| 4 | 大輪子 | Big Tire |
| 5 | 複數系列 | Five Series of Repetitions |
| 6 | 天書 | Book from the Sky |
| 7 | 鬼打牆 | Ghosts Pounding the Wall |
| 8 | A, B, C... | A, B, C... |
| 9 | My Book | My Book |
| 10 | 一個轉換案例的研究 | A Case Study of Transference |
| 11 | 文化動物 | Cultrual Animal |
| 12 | 轉話 | Telephone |
| 13 | 蠶花與蠶系列作品 | Silkworm Series |
| 14 | 英文方塊字書法與教室 | Square Word Calligraphy and the Classroom |
| 15 | 讀風景—《文字寫生》系列 | Landscape |
| 16 | 煙草計畫 | Tobacco Project |
| 17 | 何處惹塵埃？ | Where Dose the Dust Itself Collect? |
| 18 | 背後的故事 | Background Story |
| 19 | 魔毯 | Magic Carpet |
| 20 | 芥子園山水卷 | Mustard Seed Garden Landscape Scroll |
| 21 | 地書 | Book from the Ground |
| 22 | 漢字的性格 | The Character of Characters |

1 爛漫山花 Brilliant Mountain Flowers Magazine 1975–1976

油墨、紙 Mimeograph on paper, 27 x 19.5 cm (closed), 27 x 39 cm



「文化大革命」(1966–1976)末期，徐冰因「上山下鄉」政策使然，於北京大學附屬中學畢業之後，從1974年到1977年，被派往北京延慶縣的花盆公社插隊務農。花盆村位於太行山深處，雖屬窮鄉僻壤，古風猶存。此一期間，徐冰除了深入接觸民間傳統文化，還在勞動之餘做了大量的農村生活寫生，並參與群眾文藝活動。

《爛漫山花》這份以手工製作的油印文藝刊物，基本上兼具共產黨宣傳政策和口號的作用。每期印製500冊，以農民為發送對象，也是徐冰當時參與編輯與勞作活動的重要紀錄。刊物中的木刻版畫插圖為徐冰所作，呈現出克難中的單純與素樸。2005年，徐冰回到此地探望老鄉，農民周尚春將自己保存了30多年的《爛漫山花》全套刊物送給了徐冰。

徐冰認為，《爛漫山花》堪稱他第一件關於「書」的作品。



Near the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), Xu Bing graduated from the Affiliated High School of Peking University, and was “sent down” to Yanqing County outside of Beijing as part of the “Down to the Countryside” policy. There he did agricultural work for the Huapen Village government from 1974 to 1977. Huapen was located deep in the Taihang mountains. Although the area was impoverished, its appearance remained larger unchanged from antiquity. During this period Xu Bing became deeply involved in traditional folk culture. When not doing farm work, he produced copious sketches of rural life, and also took part in community cultural events.

The handmade, mimeographed *Brilliant Mountain Flowers Magazine* was a cultural journal that basically disseminated Communist Party propaganda and slogans. Each issue was a run of 500 copies. The intended readership was local farming people. It also served as an important record of Xu Bing's participation in editing and farm work. The woodblock print illustrations presented the simple, rustic life of the locals overcoming hardship. When Xu Bing made a return visit in 2005, the farmer Zhou Shangchun presented him with a complete set of all the issues of *Brilliant Mountain Flowers Magazine*, which he had kept for over 30 years.

In the view of Xu Bing, *Brilliant Mountain Flowers Magazine* was his first artwork on the subject of “books.”

2 碎玉集 Shattered Jade 1977–1983

木刻版畫 Woodcut on paper



1977年底，已經返回北京的徐冰，通過（中國大陸）全國高考，被中央美術學院錄取，分配到版畫系學習。中國1930年代至1940年代最具代表性的木刻版畫家李樺（1907–1994）和古元（1919–1996），當時仍在版畫系任教，於是成了徐冰重要的指導者。

在校期間，徐冰表現優異，曾獲學生創作競賽一等獎。同時，他的足跡也遍及南北各地的山區水域，以藝術家的身份深入廣大社會的生活層面，更畫了大量的寫生作品。

這套名為《碎玉集》的袖珍木刻版畫，總計約有150幅之多，是徐冰在美院學習期間（1977–1981）到畢業後留校任教之初的創作。這些小品係以鄉村為題材，反映他在離開農村，進入美術圈之後，對過去那段純樸平淡的鄉村生活的留戀之情。其中，部分作品還曾入選歐、美、日多國的展覽。值得注意的是，這套小版畫在文革結束後出現，正好與文革時期的「假」、「大」、「空」等美術型態形成鮮明對比；因此，對中國當時的版畫界，特別是版畫系學生，產生了一定的影響。

從這次展出的《碎玉集》部分作品，可以清楚看出徐冰的木刻刀法剛健有力，作品呈現短小精悍的形象直接性及美感特質。除了純粹的黑白對比，也有套色多彩的表現。就題材的表現和意象的風格而言，《碎玉集》也讓人聯想中國東漢時期（25–220）的畫像磚；兩者都反映中國廣大農民的生活景觀。《碎玉集》這批作品代表了徐冰早期的風格，而且持續近10年之久。

By the end of 1977, Xu Bing had returned to Beijing and passed China's National Higher Education Entrance Examination, gaining admission to the China Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) and entering the department of printmaking. The most representative woodblock print artists of the 1930s and 1940s Li Hua (1907–1994) and Gu Yuan (1919–1996) still taught at the department at that time, and they became important mentors of Xu Bing.

While at university Xu Bing performed exceptionally well and once won first place in a student art competition. At the same time he traveled to remote regions throughout China, getting involved in the life of the people at many levels in the capacity of an artist, and producing many realistic portraits of daily life.

The collection of pocket-sized woodblock prints *Shattered Jade* includes over 150 works, produced during his student days at CAFA (1977–1981) and his early years as a teacher there. Taking farming communities as their subject matter, these small pictures reflect the fondness Xu felt for that period of simple country life after leaving the countryside and entering the art academy. Some of these works were included in exhibitions in several countries in Europe, the Americas and Japan. Worth noting is that this group of prints appeared after the Cultural Revolution ended, forming a vivid contrast to the “false,” “grandiose,” “empty” forms of that era. Consequently, they had a genuine impact on the Chinese printmaking world of the day, particularly printmaking department students.

Some of the prints in the *Shattered Jade* series clearly reveal Xu Bing's puissant engraving style. The works' small yet dynamic images possess directness and a distinctive aesthetic quality. In addition to the pure contrast of black and white, some are printed in multiple colors. In its expression of subject and style of image, *Shattered Jade* evokes associations with the pictorial bricks of the Eastern Han era (25–220), as both reflect the sprawling scenes of peasant life in China. A set of works created over the course of a full decade, *Shattered Jade* is quite representative of Xu Bing's early style.

3 早期素描與版畫 Early Drawings and Prints 1980s

自然1——有山的地方 Nature 1—Mountain Place
1985 木刻版畫 Woodblock print, 46 x 61 cm



從中央美院學生時期開始，徐冰就積極深入民間寫生。1981年起，他留校任教，在版畫系教授素描基礎課、木刻技法和創作；為此，他寫下了長達10多萬字的《素描教學筆記》。除了赴外地寫生，他也考察中國古代藝術遺跡，前往敦煌、大足、西安各地，進行臨摹。在自然寫生和臨摹古代藝術的過程中，徐冰留下許多手稿和筆記本。此處所見的素描本，就是他這一時期的寫生實錄。

也在1980年代前期，徐冰的版畫作品開始受到國際展覽和中國內部一些藝術競賽的肯定，譬如入選法國春季沙龍美展。采風、寫生所畫的風景素描，也提供徐冰這一時期發展木刻和銅版畫主題的重要參考。不同的是，寫生畫面的實景感及空間透視較為鮮明，轉換到木版或銅版的媒介之後，版畫的視覺構成變得較為概念化，甚至有平面化的傾向。以徐冰1980年代中後期的一些單色木刻版畫為例，包括這次展出的《自然1——有山的地方》（1985）、《自然2——一片種子》（1985）、《一條大河》（1987）和《草垛的倒影》（1987）等作，刻劃的都是農村的莊稼地和山河景觀。畫面空間的遠近和高低，主要以簡化的線性風格，做出了區域性的分隔。用來描繪土地或山河的紋理造型，譬如農田莊稼的植被、樹木、房舍、河流波紋一類的母題，帶著模組化的傾向，以重複和反覆的手法表達，不但凸顯半抽象的質感，觀念性的意識和意圖也呼之欲出。



甘肅南部風景
Landscape, Southern Gansu
1979–1980
鋼筆、紙 Ink on paper
15.5 x 20.5 cm

Starting in his days as a student at China Central Academy of Fine Arts, Xu Bing became deeply involved in depicting the lives of ordinary people. Beginning in 1981, he took a position at his alma mater, teaching basic courses in sketching and woodblock printing technique and design. For this, he wrote *Notes on Sketching Pedagogy* at the length of 100,000 characters. In addition to venturing afield to sketch outdoor scenes, he traveled to such locales as Dunhuang, Dazu and Xi'an to inspect, and copy, the remains of ancient Chinese art. In the process of painting natural scenes and copying historical artwork, Xu left behind many drafts and notebooks. The sketchbooks in this area are authentic examples of his early-period drafts.

Also in the early 1980s, Xu Bing began to win affirmation at international exhibitions and a few art competitions in China. For example, he was featured at the Salon de Printemps in France. His sketches of natural landscapes or daily life also served as crucial references for the subject matter of his woodblock and copperplate prints of this period. What was different was that the sketches had a more vivid sense of authenticity of place and spatial perspective; when converted to the media of woodblock or copperplate prints, the visual composition became more conceptual, even tending toward flatness. For example, some of Xu's monochromatic woodblock prints of the middle to late 1980s—including the currently exhibited works *Nature 1 - Mountain Place* (1985), *Nature 2 - A Seed* (1985), *Big River* (1987), and *Haystack Reflection* (1987)—depicted farmlands and natural landscapes with mountains and streams. The sense of proximity and height in the pictures was effected through a partitioning of visual fields, mainly with minimal lines. When used to illustrate the textural formations of the land or landscapes—for example, field crops, trees, houses, or waves on a river—this method tended to make the images appear modular. Expressed with repetitive lines, it not only highlighted the works' semi-abstract quality, but also revealed an awareness and intention of conceptuality.

4 大輪子 Big Tire 1986



進入「後文革」時期的中國大陸藝壇，一方面有官方美院內部發起，透過1979年「全國美展」揭開的「傷痕美術」。另一方面，也在1979年，由民間一批體制外的藝術青年組成的「星星畫會」，運用「中國美術館」外鐵柵欄的非正式空間進行展覽；但歷時不過兩日，即被公安局勒令停展。「星星畫會」此次美展後來被譽為中國前衛藝術與當代藝術的起點。

1985年之後，「85美術運動」(1985–1989)接續展開，更廣泛結合了學院內外的青年藝術菁英，動員的範圍廣及全中國。這是中國前衛暨當代藝術的一波大潮。而這波潮流掀起之前，徐冰在留校任教期間，已於1984年進入中央美院碩士班攻讀，且持續深入民間采風，考察民間藝術，譬如陝北。

In the post-Cultural Revolution era, two distinct movements arose within the Chinese art community. On the one hand, "Scar Art" appeared within the context of official art museums, debuting at the National Art Exhibition in 1979. On the other hand, the "Stars Group," a collective of artists working privately outside the establishment, also surfaced in 1979. They held exhibitions in an informal space outside the metal fence of the National Art Museum of China in Beijing. After being open for a mere two days, the exhibition was forcibly closed by public security forces. Following this exhibition, the Stars Group became known as the starting point for avant-garde art and contemporary art in China.

Beginning in 1985, the '85 Movement (1985–1989) began to unfold, more broadly integrating elite young artists both inside and outside the academy, its range eventually expanding to include artists from all over China. This was a major wave of avant-garde and contemporary art in China. And prior to its rise, Xu Bing had already entered the master's program at the Central Academy of Fine Arts while still a university teacher, deeply involved in painting ordinary life and conducting surveys of folk art in such places as northern Shaanxi Province.



創造新的藝術語言和精神烏托邦是「85美術運動」新潮的重要訴求。《大輪子》正是徐冰此一階段之作。實際發生的時間為1986年6月18日，由徐冰夥同中央美院版畫系的部分青年教師，針對印刷概念及其可能性，進行的一次行動試驗。他們共有10人左右，協力滾動一個近二米高的輪胎，一路從馬路滾到巷道，再從美院大門進入展覽空間，最終在展場的地面上，具體而象徵性地留下輪胎滾動過後的形色軌跡。

透過《大輪子》，徐冰提出了一個可以迴圈往返且永無休止的「轉印」概念，大大拓寬了版畫原本屬於繪畫的一環，或僅止於文字或畫面複製的用途。因為是行為的實踐和裝置，這件作品如今只能透過當時的照片紀錄，略窺事件當下的實況。然而，藉由《大輪子》的發生(happening)，徐冰此一觀念上的轉化，對他往後藝術的發展，產生了莫大的效應，而且持續衍生變化。簡單地說，版畫這一媒介和視覺形式，到了徐冰手中，已逐漸擴大為無遠弗屆的觀念藝術表達。



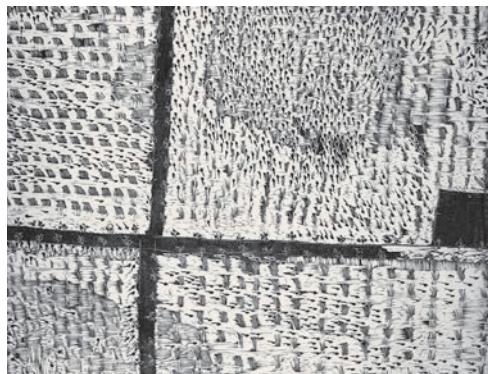
To create a new artistic language and a spiritual utopia was the major aim of the '85 Movement. *Big Tire* was Xu Bing's work of this period. It took place on June 18, 1986 when Xu, along with a few other young CAFA instructors, engaged in their first experiment in art action, exploring the concept of printing and its possibilities. About 10 people joined together to roll a truck tire, nearly two meters high, from the main gate of their academy along major thoroughfares and small lanes and into an exhibition space. Finally, they concretely and symbolically left a color print of the tire track on the floor of the gallery.

With *Big Tire* Xu posed the concept of a circular, reversible and everlasting "imprint transfer," greatly expanding the definition of print beyond a form of painting or a means to reproduce text and pictures. Because it was a performance and an installation, this work could only be documented with photographs from that time, affording us today a glimpse at the real conditions at that moment. Nevertheless, this "happening," and the conceptual transformation it signaled, had a profound effect on the future development of his art, and continued to generate change. Put simply, in Xu Bing's hands, the medium and form of print gradually grew into a far-reaching mode of conceptual artistic expression.

5 五個複數系列

Five Series of Repetitions

1986–1987



田 *Field* 1987 版畫 Woodblock print on paper, 54.5 x 96.4 cm

進入研究生時期，徐冰對版畫作為「間接性」的繪畫，及其「複數性」的特質，產生概念上的興趣。1986年開始著手的《五個複數系列》木刻版畫，就是以「複數性」作為構思的起點。1987年，他在碩士學位畢業展中，發表了這套《五個複數系列》和另一套《石系列》銅版畫。同一年稍後，他整理個人的版畫觀點和創作心得，發表成〈對複數性繪畫的新探索與再認識〉專文。

徐冰寫道：「複數及規定性印痕是版畫別於其他畫種的關鍵所在，只有追尋這條線索，才能探尋版畫藝術的本質特徵。」在論述當中，他分析西方現當代藝術，以安迪·沃荷(Andy Warhol, 1928–1987)的作品為例，認為「版畫較其他種類繪畫與現代藝術有著更密切、直接的關係。」尤其從「複製性」來看，版畫其實是「充滿現代感的節奏形式。」

徐冰說他在研究生畢業創作中，「試圖用盡可能純粹的版畫手段。」實際上，藉由《五個複數系列》的試探，他更有意識地尋求新的版畫製作方法：首先，他把創作的過程也合併到作品之中；第二，挑戰材料的極限。前所未見的是，《五個複數系列》記錄了一般不會公開的刻製木板的過程，堪稱版畫藝術的創舉。

As a graduate student, Xu Bing became intrigued with the concept of the print as an “indirect” painting, and its special quality of “multiplicity.” *Five Series of Repetitions*, which he started in 1986, took multiplicity as its conceptual starting point. Xu released this work, along with the copperplate print *Stone Series*, for his 1987 master’s program thesis exhibition. Slightly later the same year, he gathered his thoughts and creative experiences on printing in the article “New Explorations and Re-recognition of Multiplicitous Painting.”

Xu wrote: “Multiple, standardized copies are the key characteristic that sets printing apart from other forms of painting. Only by following this thread can one discover the unique qualities of print art.” In his essay, he analyzed Western contemporary art, critiquing, for example, Andy Warhol (1928–1987) and expressing the opinion that “printing has a more intimate, direct relationship with modern art than other categories of painting.” Especially when considering its “replicability,” printing is actually “a form filled with a modern-feeling cadence.”

According to Xu, in his graduation project he “attempted to use the purest possible method of printing.” In fact, in his experimentation with *Five Series of Repetitions*, he consciously employed a new method of print production: Firstly, he integrated the creative process into the work itself. And secondly, he challenged the

簡單地說，他將印製過程的每個階段，都做了視覺化的呈現。開始是完全沒有任何雕刻痕跡的全黑色印刷；最後空白的「印製」，則是在同一塊木版上，將原來留有刀痕紋路的圖形，全部加以剔除。以《五個複數系列》中的兩件為例，《自留地》這件由11幅畫面構成，《田》則有13幅畫面。據徐冰描述：「11幅畫面，同是一塊板為媒介物印刷的結果，這裡我採用了邊刻邊刷的又一種複數形式，第一幅是未刻之前全板的印刷，第二幅畫面出現最初的刀痕，從第三幅起，刀痕增多，逐漸顯出形象，至第六幅為習慣概念上完整的畫面；在此基礎上，繼續邊刻邊印，於是畫面形象開始消失，直至第11幅除邊緣幾處隱約刀痕外，已為白紙本身。」

一般說來，繪畫對時間的表達，多半是象徵性、暗示性，甚至是壓縮的。徐冰用一塊木刻版再現一個地方，階段性地將其空間的轉變，按照時間的線性排列，具體呈現為畫面，彷彿將時間「解壓縮」，讓觀者目睹了一個「歷程」。整體而言，這些印刷品完整地裱在一個長條形上，從什麼都沒有到有一點點東西，再回到什麼都沒有。此一做法不僅展現時空的更迭，也隱喻生活的輪迴，甚至預示了中國農村土地在改革開放之後，即將面對的急遽變遷。

可以確認的是，至少從《五個複數系列》開始，「過程」作為「觀念」展現的一種形式，已經奠定徐冰日後藝術創作的思考常態。

outer limits of the material. Unprecedentedly, *Five Series of Repetitions* documented the woodblock engraving process, which most prints do not publicly reveal – something that has even been called a pioneering work.

Put simply, he visually conveyed each stage of the production process. He started with a completely black print from a wood block without any carvings on it. The final panel was white, “printed” from the same wood block, with all the knife marks completely scraped off. Two of the five series, for example, are the 11-panel composition *Ziliudi* and the 13-panel *Fields*. As Xu put it: “Eleven pictures, all of them printed from the same block. Here, I used another form of multiplicity, engraving and printing at the same time. The first panel is a printing of the whole block before it had been carved. In the second panel appears the initial carving... On this foundation, I continued to carve and print, and the image began to disappear, until in the 11th panel it had become the white paper itself, except for a few marks along the margins.”

Generally speaking, the expression of time in most paintings is symbolic and implied, or even compressed. Xu Bing used a block of wood to reproduce a place, and in the image he concretely conveyed the transformation of space in stages, according to a linear arrangement of time, as if time were “decompressed,” allowing the viewer to behold a “process.” Taken as a whole, this printed piece, mounted in one long row, starts with absolutely nothing and becomes a little something, and ultimately returns to nothing again. This method not only expresses the alteration of space and time, but also metaphorically suggests the transmigration of life. It may have even portended that, in the wake of the “Reform and Opening Up” policy, China’s farming villages and land would face dramatic changes.

What is certain is that, at least starting with *Five Series of Repetitions*, adopting a “process” as a means of expressing a concept had already established itself as the standard *modus operandi* for Xu Bing’s art in the future.



6 天書

Book from the Sky

1987–1991

徐冰於北京刻天書 Xu Bing working on *Book from the Sky*, Beijing, 1987



「1986年的某一天，我在想一件別的事情時，卻想到要做這樣一本誰都讀不懂的書。這個想法讓我激動……。」就在1987年間，徐冰忙完碩士畢業展之後，立即從7月起著手《天書》創作的準備工作。

有關「天書」的性質，徐冰提到自己一開始就有幾個明確的想法。首先，「這本書不具備作為書的本質，所有的內容是被抽空的，但它非常像書」；其次，「這本書的完成途徑，必須是一個『真正的書』的過程」；第三，「這本書的每一個細節，每道工序必須精準、嚴格、一絲不苟。」

在形制上，徐冰希望這部書「看上去不是素人所為，而是有知識依據的」，能提供一種「很有文化」的「經典」感覺。同時，徐冰強調：「製作，必須是手工刻製、印刷的。被印出來的東西，才感覺是正式的；是要認真對待的；是和真理有關的。」因此，書的字體，徐冰考慮選擇「宋體」（按：徐冰所指的「宋體」，台灣慣稱為「明體」），因為宋體也叫「官體」，「通常用於重要文件和嚴肅的事情，是最沒有個人情緒指向的、最正派的字體。」

為了《天書》，徐冰總共造了4千多個假字，因為「出現在〔中文〕日常讀物上的字是4千左右……誰掌握4千以上的字，就可以閱讀，就是知識分子。」照徐冰的設定，雖然是假字，卻必須「最大限度地像漢字，又不是漢字。」因此，他模仿漢字的造字規律，參考《康熙字典》筆劃從少到多的序例關係，平行對位地編造他自己的假字。

“One day in 1986, I was thinking about something else, but instead ended up thinking about a book that no one could make sense of. That thought really moved me...” Thus, in July of 1987, after Xu Bing had finished with his master’s program thesis exhibition, he immediately started preparations for making *Book from the Sky*.

Regarding the nature of *Book from the Sky*, Xu Bing has noted that from the outset he had a number of specific ideas. Firstly, “this book would not be a book per se, and all of its contents would be empty, but it would still be very much like a book.” Secondly, “the process of completing this book must be the process for a ‘real book.’” Thirdly, “every detail of this book, every procedure, must be performed precisely, rigorously, meticulously.”

In terms of form, Xu hoped this book would “not appear to be the work of an untrained person, but made knowledgeably,” that it would exude a “very cultured,” “classic” feeling. At the same time, Xu emphasized: “The product had to be engraved and printed by hand. That’s the only way the printed object could feel formal. It needed to be treated seriously; it had to do with the truth.” Consequently, for the book’s script, he considered choosing the Song form (Note: the “Song form” to which Xu refers is commonly known as the Ming form in Taiwan), because the Song form is also known as the “official form.” “Usually it is used in important documents and for serious matters. It is the script with the least reference to personal emotions, the most formal.”

For *Book from the Sky*, Xu Bing created over 4,000 “false” characters, because “around four thousand characters appear in everyday (Chinese) reading material... Whoever can grasp more than four thousand characters can read, and counts as an intellectual.” According to Xu



綜合媒材裝置 Mixed media installation
香港藝術館借展 On loan from the Hong Kong Museum of Art
北美館展出 Installation at Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2014

克服活字版編排印刷的刻版、組版等技術問題之後，到了1988年下半年，徐冰已經完成2千多個字。中國美術館給了他一個10月份的展覽檔期。他決定以「徐冰版畫藝術展」命名，強調「印刷」對這件作品的重要性。在展出的現場，三條長卷從展廳中央垂掛下來，地上擺放的是線裝和蝴蝶裝形式的偽「典籍」——裝置方式已經初具我們今日所見的組態。值得一提的是，這件作品最初的名稱是「析世鑒——世紀末卷」。後來，人們習慣以「天書」稱之，徐冰也從善如流地採用。

儘管展覽造成中國藝術界內外的議論紛紛。徐冰心中卻進一步確認了這部「書」應有的面貌。他決定重訂開本，再重刻一套字。光是雕刻先前的2千多字，又花了他近一年時間。等到4千字的新版完成，他已不想再用版畫的油墨製作，而是透過中華書局的介紹，在北京遠郊的韓營村，找到專門印製古籍的傳統工廠印刷。結果，一印就是兩年的時間。徐冰後來寫道：「在過去，新版開印是件大事，要用朱墨打樣。我當時不懂這些，否則，應該有五套朱墨的《天書》。」

Bing’s design, although they are fake characters, they must “be similar to Chinese characters to the greatest degree possible, but also not be Chinese characters.” Therefore, he imitated the rules for creating characters, making reference to the sequential relationship of brushstrokes, from least to most, as set out in the *Kangxi Dictionary*, fabricating his own orderly, yet ersatz, characters.

Overcoming such technical problems as engraving and assembling the movable type blocks to be laid out and printed, Xu had completed over 2,000 characters by the latter half of 1988. The National Art Museum of China had given him an exhibition slot in October. His exhibition, “The Art of Xu Bing,” was intended to underscore the importance of the printing process. At the exhibition site, he hung three long scrolls in the center of the hall, and on the floor he placed fake “books” made with stitched binding and butterfly binding – an early form of installation similar to the configuration we see today. Interestingly, the work had originally been titled “An Analyzed Reflection of the World: the Final Volume of the Century,” but in time people began calling it *Book from the Sky* on their own, and cheerfully following good advice, Xu embraced it.

Although the exhibition provoked controversy inside and outside China’s art world, in his own mind Xu was certain of the appearance this “book” should have. He decided to make it all over again, and engraved a new set of characters. Simply carving the first set of more than 2,000 characters had taken him nearly a year. By the time he had completed the new version with 4,000 characters, he no longer wished to produce the book with woodblock printing ink. Instead, through an introduction from Zhonghua Book Company, he found a traditional press that specialized in printing old-style books, in Hanying Village on the outskirts of Beijing. As it turns out, one printing took two years’ time. Later, Xu Bing wrote: “In the past, the first print run for a new publication was a major event, to be done with red cinnabar ink. I didn’t understand all that at the time. If I had, I would have made five sets of *Book from the Sky* in red ink.”

Although formed completely of fake characters, *Book from the Sky* possesses its own “rigorous logic and structure,” punctiliously including “preface, page numbers, title, table of contents, subtitles, general introduction, chapter introductions, postscripts, footnotes, headnotes, and passage endings,” according to Xu Bing. It is specifically this rigorous logic and structure that “strictly ‘manages’ the beginning,

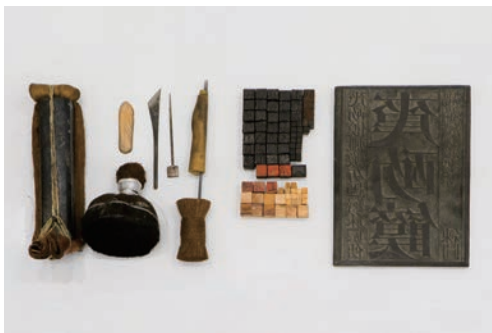


天書 *Books of Book from the Sky*

雖然全由假字構成，《天書》卻自有一套「嚴密邏輯和結構」，嚴謹地涵括了「冊序、頁碼、題目、總目、分目、總序、分序、跋文、注釋、眉批，以及段落終止，等等……。」根據徐冰的描述，正是這套嚴密的邏輯和結構，「嚴格地『管理』這堆『文字』的起始、順序和範圍，這讓被管理的部分顯得更是空洞。」如果可以將《天書》——連同徐冰這裡的話語——視為一則隱喻，那麼，其所反映或論述的對象，無疑正是當時的中國及其文化語境，乃至於深層的體制和結構。

《天書》總共印了120套，每套四冊，共604頁；每一套都裝在一個由河北邯鄲的老木匠特製的核桃木盒裡。鉅細靡遺的工序讓這套書直到1991年秋天才告完成；在此之前，徐冰已於1990年7月去了美國，而且，不知何時再回中國。

事後回顧，徐冰這麼說：「從八七年到九一年，我做了什麼？只能說是：有一個人用了四年的時間，做了一件什麼都沒說的事情。」事實證明，《天書》在印製完成之後，很快地透過海外的展覽，讓徐冰成功地在1990年代期間踏入國際藝壇，並引發西方學術界的熱烈討論。簡單說，《天書》以中國語境為出發點，觸及文字語言系統和文化、體制的關連，以及相應而生的民族心理、傳統與歷史思維。看似什麼都沒說也不能讀的《天書》，不但擾動觀者對中國及其傳統的反思，更讓文史哲各界的國際學者為它寫下許許多多的詮釋和論述。



天書活字原版、製書工具

Book from the Sky: original woodcut block, tools

sequence and scope of this pile of 'words.' This makes the part that is managed appear to be even more empty." If one can view *Book from the Sky*—in conjunction with the words of Xu Bing—as a metaphor, then what it reflects or describes is China of that era and its cultural milieu, or even, at a deep level, its system or structure.

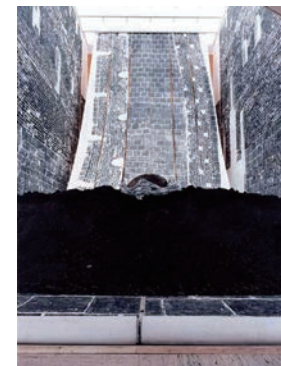
The artist printed 120 sets of *Book from the Sky*. Each set had four volumes, and a total of 604 pages. Each set was encased in a walnut wood box specially made by an old carpenter from Handan in Hebei Province. Because of the many detailed procedures involved, the book's manufacture was not announced as complete until the fall of 1991. Prior to this, in July 1990, Xu had gone to the United States and did not know when he would return to China.

Looking back later, Xu said: "From 1987 to 1991, what did I do? All I can say is: there was a person who spent four years doing something that didn't say anything." In reality, after it was printed, *Book from the Sky* quickly appeared in exhibitions overseas and allowed Xu Bing to rise in the international art world during the 1990s, inciting impassioned discussion in Western academic circles. Put simply, adopting the context of China as its starting point, *Book from the Sky* considered the connections between textual and linguistic systems, on the one hand, and culture and establishments, on the other, as well as the national psychology, traditions and historical ways of thought that arise as a consequence. This seemingly inarticulate, unreadable *Book from the Sky* not only stimulated its viewers to muse on China and its traditions, but also prompted a host of interpretations and commentaries from international scholars in a variety of fields, from literature to history to philosophy.

7 鬼打牆 Ghosts Pounding the Wall 1990–1991

綜合媒材裝置 *Mixed media installation*

Installation at Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1991



1990年間，徐冰確定自己即將出國，且不知何時才回來。因此，他決定將一個思索已久的想法付諸實現——就是去「拓印一個巨大自然物」。當時，他的理念是，任何有高低起伏的東西，都可以轉印到二維平面上，成為版畫。做了各種準備之後，他於該年5月，偕同朋友、學生和當地農民，前往北京金山嶺長城。他們以「長城」為對象，工作將近一個月，拓印了一個烽火台的三面 and 一段城牆。

回顧中國書法史，摹搨經典碑石的傳統自古有之。不過，徐冰此處的動作其實是稍早《大輪子》(1986)以「實物的痕跡轉印」的擴大，而且，更具行為和觀念藝術上的意義。相較於《天書》係由徐冰自己製版，如今他以極具中國政治、軍事和文化歷史象徵意義的「長城」作為拓印/轉印之物，等於也把長城這一浩繁巨大的建築量體，看成一個兼涵時間與空間雙重性的物質文本。

換個方式說，徐冰彷彿將長城視為另一本「書」，城牆的實體成了現成的版式。與《天書》無法讓人讀懂相比，長城混雜自然的風侵雨蝕和人為歷史的構築，經過拓印之後，雖然無字無語，只見時空撫摩過後的抽象痕跡，卻未必不能閱讀、感知或聯想。

值得一提的插曲是，儘管《天書》(當時仍以《析世鑒——末世卷》命名)曾於1988年10月和1989年2月，兩度在中國美術館的殿堂展出，但是，經歷1989年6月的天安門事件之後，保守派藝評家卻提出「鬼打牆藝術」一詞，作為批評《天書》之說——影射藝術家的思維及作品有問題而不能自

拔。對此，徐冰並未爭辯，乾脆直接挪用「鬼打牆」三字，作為拓印長城的作品名稱。

徐冰在1990年7月赴美之前，《鬼打牆》的後製工作尚未完成。1991年，未完成的《鬼打牆》運往美國。在威斯康辛大學艾維翰美術館(Elvehjem Museum of Art; 今之Chazen Museum of Art)的協助下，徐冰才完成這件作品的後期製作。同年12月，《鬼打牆》連同之前在中國完成的《五個複數系列》和《天書》，一起在該館正式展出，也是徐冰在美國的首次個展。

《鬼打牆》是一件由巨大拓片連接而成的巨型作品。裝置展出時，全作分成三個部分。以北美館展出的現場來看，從挑高大廳正中央的位置，懸樑垂掛到地面土堆位置的長城畫面，這部分共由六條寬幅約一米不等的城牆拓片組成。如果全部展開，這段金山嶺長城的畫面——實際是拓印長城主體的步道含左右兩端的城垛——將長達32米。另外兩個部分，則是位於大廳左右兩邊的垂直畫面，拓印的是烽火台「庫房樓」兩側的牆面——分別由11條寬幅約一米，長度約13米的拓片組成。

當初發想這件作品時，藝術家有興趣的是「拓印」作為記錄手段的特殊意義。拓印不同於影視或照片等形像紀錄的方式；與前者比較，後者只是影子。至於拓印的力量，則是源自於它曾經和真實的歷史之物，進行了直接而實體的接觸。

有人提出，《鬼打牆》是世界上最大的一幅版畫；徐冰則說：「那時年青，野心大，做東西就大。」



徐冰與工作團隊於北京金山嶺長城拓印
Xu Bing and his crew working on scaffolding installed on the
Jinshanling section of the Great Wall, Beijing, 1990

In 1990 Xu Bing confirmed that he was about to leave China but was unsure when he might return. Therefore, he decided to undertake a project he had long contemplated: “making a rubbing of a huge natural object.” At the time his premise was that anything with an uneven surface could be transformed into a print, by transferring its impression onto a two-dimensional plane. In May of that year, after making all the necessary preparations, he went to Jinshan Ridge in a remote area of Beijing Municipality, along with some friends, students and local farmers. Working for nearly a month, they made rubbings of three faces of a beacon tower and a section of the Great Wall of China.

In the history of Chinese calligraphy, making impressions of classic stone tablets has been a tradition since ancient times. However, in undertaking this project, Xu was actually expanding upon the idea of “transferring the imprints of a real object” that he had explored earlier on with *Big Tire* (1986). It also had significance as a work of performance art and conceptual art. Compared to *Book from the Sky*, which Xu produced by himself, making a rubbing/imprint of the Great Wall – an object with enormous symbolic import politically, militarily, culturally and politically – amounted to viewing this colossal architectural mass as a material text with temporal and spatial qualities.

Stated in a different manner, it was as if Xu Bing viewed the Great Wall as a “book,” as if he was converting the solid form of the wall into a manufactured print. *Book from the Sky* could not be read or comprehended. Yet, conversely, after the Great Wall of China – a composite of natural wind and water erosion and a manmade historical structure – was converted into a printed rubbing, it was not necessarily impossible to read, perceive or intuit, even though it had no text or language. One merely needed to observe the abstract marks left by the caresses of time and space.

One side note worth mentioning is that even though *Book from the Sky* had twice been exhibited within the hallowed halls of the National Art Museum of China, in October 1988 and February 1989 (albeit still under the title *An Analyzed Reflection of the World*, etc.), it had been denigrated by conservative critics in the wake of the June 1989 Tiananmen Incident as “the art of ghosts pounding a wall” – implying that the artist’s thinking and his works were problematical and self-absorbed. Xu did not attempt any rebuttal, but instead directly appropriated the phrase “Ghosts Pounding the Wall” as the title of his imprint of the Great Wall of China.

Before Xu Bing moved to the United States in July of 1990, the post-production for *Ghosts Pounding the Wall* was not yet finished. In 1991 the incomplete work was sent to the USA. Xu was only able to finish the final steps of production with the assistance of the Elvehjem Museum of Art (today, the Chazen Museum of Art) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In December of that year, the museum formally exhibited *Ghosts Pounding the Wall*, along with *Five Series of Repetitions* and *Book from the Sky*, which he had completed earlier in China. This was his first exhibition in America.

Ghosts Pounding the Wall is an enormous work comprised of several large-scale rubbings joined together. When the installation is exhibited, the entire work is divided into three parts. At Taipei Fine Arts Museum, the first part, an impression of the Great Wall, hangs from the center of the elevated lobby ceiling down to a heap of dirt on the floor. This section is composed of six different rubbings of varying widths, in the general range of one meter. If the full length were opened up, this rubbing of a section of the Great Wall running along Jinshan Ridge – specifically, the walkway on top of the wall and the left and right parapets on either side – would be 32 meters long. The other two parts, hanging down along the left and right walls of the lobby, are rubbings of two sides of a beacon tower storehouse – each composed of 11 segments approximately one meter wide and 13 meters long.

When he was conceptualizing the work, what interested the artist was the special significance of rubbings as a method of documentation. They are fundamentally different from such modes of image documentation as videos or photographs, which in comparison are mere shadows. The power of rubbings comes from their once having had direct and material contact with the genuine historical object.

Some people have described *Ghosts Pounding the Wall* as the world’s largest print. Xu Bing, however, comments: “Back then I was young. My ambition was big, so I did things big.”

8 A, B, C... 1991

陶 Ceramic blocks, 8.9 x 8.9 x 17.8 cm (36)



延續對文字的思考和敏感度，徐冰旅美之後，也將文化的注意力轉向英語。《A, B, C...》是他在美國的第一件創作。透過這件作品，不難揣摩徐冰當時學習英語的情境。尤其是，他在稍後的1992年進入南達科塔大學(University of South Dakota)攻讀碩士學位，鑽研當代版畫、製紙和西方傳統書籍裝幀等技法。當時，徐冰確有學習英文的迫切性；不過，他也坦承自己在英語的學習上，速度較慢。

不同的文化之間，為求溝通、學習而理解，語言必須轉換。《A, B, C...》這件作品反映的便是以漢字音譯羅馬字母的拼音時，連帶出現的字義怪誕性。作品共由36個放大的陶製印刷字模組成，基本的概念是選擇發音適合的漢字，作為26個英文字母的「音譯」對照。例如：字母「A」用「哀」，「B」用「彼」，「C」用「西」來表示；「W」則用「達布六」三字表示。

耐人尋味的是，不少英文字母的中文音譯，選擇了語義不很吉祥，甚至負面的中文字彙作為對照，包括：「F」用「癌夫」，「H」用「癌痴」，「I」用「唉」，「L」用「癌爾」，「M」用「癌母」，「P」用「屁」，「S」用「癌斯」，「V」用「危」，「X」用「癌克斯」，「Z」用「賊」表示。這類看似合乎邏輯的字音轉譯，其實凸顯了不合邏輯的尷尬與荒謬。過程中，也多少投射了徐冰初期在面對英語環境時的一些困難。



癌克思 X

After moving to the United States, Xu Bing continued to contemplate the nature of text, and remained acutely sensitive regarding written language. There, he turned his cultural focus to English. *A, B, C...* was his first work made in the USA. Through this artwork, it is not difficult to deduce his circumstances as an English student. Shortly thereafter he entered the University of South Dakota in pursuit of a master’s degree, studying contemporary printmaking, papermaking and traditional Western bookbinding techniques. At the time Xu felt a particularly urgent need to learn English; however, as he acknowledges, his mastery of the language proceeded at a relatively slow pace.

When bridging two cultures, the respective languages must be mutually converted, for the sake of communication, learning and understanding. The work *A, B, C...* reflects how strange meanings can emerge when Chinese characters are used to transliterate Roman letters. The work is comprised of 36 oversized ceramic cubes representing a transliteration of the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet to Chinese characters. For example, “A” is transliterated as “哀” – which is pronounced ai but means “sadness.” “B” becomes “彼” (“opposite”); “C” becomes “西” (“west”); and “W” becomes the three Chinese characters “達布六” (“big cloth six”).

Intriguingly, several of these transliterations convey ominous, or even negative, connotations in Chinese. For example: “F” becomes “癌夫” (“cancer husband”); “H” becomes “癌痴” (“cancer idiot”); “I” becomes “唉” (“oh”); “L” becomes “癌爾” (“cancer you”); “M” becomes “癌母” (“cancer mother”); “P” becomes “屁” (“fart”); “V” becomes “危” (“danger”); and “Z” becomes “賊” (“thief”). These seemingly logical transliterations actually underscore a sense of awkwardness and absurdity. To a certain degree, the process also projects Xu’s difficulties when first grappling with an English-language environment.

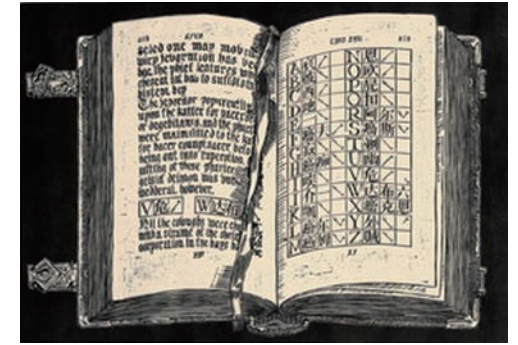
English letter	Chinese character	Sound (pinyin)	Meaning
A	哀	ai	sorrow
B	彼	bi	other
C	西	xi	west
D	地	di	earth
E	一	yi	one
F	癌夫	ai fu	cancer / father
G	寂	ji	lonesome
H	癌痴	ai chi	cancer / crazy
I	唉	ai	oh
J	介	jie	lying between
K	凱	kai	triumphant
L	癌尔	ai er	cancer / you
M	癌母	ai mu	cancer / mother
N	恩	en	graciousness
O	欧	ou	Europe
P	屁	pi	fart
Q	叩	kou	knocking on
R	阿尔	a er	[a] / you
S	癌斯	ai si	cancer / [si]
T	悌	ti	respect as brother
U	幽	you	quiet
V	危	wei	danger
W	达布六	da bu liu	reaching / cloth / six
X	癌克斯	ai ke si	cancer / gram / [si]
Y	外	wai	outside
Z	贼	zei	thief

Note: Brackets [] indicate characters are used primarily for phonetic representation.

對照表 Phonetic table from A, B, C...

9 My Book 1992

版畫 Woodblock print on paper, 35 x 250 cm



《My Book》是以《A, B, C...》為基礎，進一步發展出來的版畫作品。畫面所見是一部以西方傳統裝幀方式製成的精裝書。在對開的頁面上，可以看到徐冰在《A, B, C...》作品中已經歸納完成的「漢字音譯英文字母」對照表。

除此之外，書頁上的文字看起來，雖然以極具書法趣味的羅馬印刷字體組成，卻跟之前的《天書》一樣，看起來像拉丁文字，實際卻是假字。換句話說，這本外觀看似經典的「我的書」，同樣是一本似是而非，無法讓人讀懂的书。

《My Book》的形制跟稍早的《五個複數系列》版畫相同，也是以同一塊木刻版面重複運用，分階段呈現畫面的刻製過程。此次隨同展出的，亦包括其木刻版。不過，《My Book》實際完成並印製的僅有五個畫面——從尚未刻版之前的全黑畫面開始，到「我的書」形體完整呈現之後，便嘎然而止。

My Book is an elaboration of the work *A, B, C...* in the form of a woodblock print. The image is of a hardcover book, typeset and bound in traditional Western fashion. The book is open to a page that shows a comparison table of the English-to-Chinese transliteration system Xu developed in *A, B, C...*

In addition, the words on the page seem to have been formed of a printed script of the Roman alphabet strongly reminiscent of calligraphy, but just like Xu's previous *Book from the Sky*, they are actually ersatz words. That is to say, the volume Xu calls "My Book," which from the outside seems to be a classic tome, is also empty within, impossible to read or comprehend.

The structure of *My Book* is similar to the earlier woodblock print *Five Series of Repetitions*, in that it also repeatedly uses the same block and reveals the process of carving the wood in stages. In this instance, the wood block itself is also on display. In *My Book* only five panels were actually completed and printed – from an entirely unengraved black panel up to the image of "My Book" in its completed form, where it abruptly stops.



10 一個轉換案例的研究 A Case Study of Transference

11 文化動物 Cultural Animal 1993–1994

《一個轉換案例的研究》於北京翰墨藝術中心表演前的準備工作
A Case Study of Transference, printing on pig prior to performance
Han Mo Arts Center, Beijing, 1994



應1994年西班牙國立索菲亞皇后美術館的邀展計畫，徐冰在1993年底發想一件以豬為角色的觀念作品。由於他早年在農村插隊期間，有過養豬的經歷，因此，選擇回到北京，進行先期實驗。

他以北京豐良種豬場為合作對象，借用位於王府井中心區，同時也是中國最早的私人非營利機構的「翰墨藝術中心」，進行這項實驗。原本是要進行閉門的實驗和資料記錄；不過，因為友人建議，也讓北京藝術圈的同仁前來觀摩。結果，1994年1月8日下午，到場圍觀的人數竟然高達2百餘人。

展場中央設置了一個五米見方的豬柵欄，地上鋪滿各種語文的書籍。開幕時，兩隻身上印滿偽文字的種豬——公豬印的是偽英文，母豬印的是偽漢字——在展場中活動、發情及交配。此即《一個轉換案例的研究》。

有趣的發現是，原本擔心豬在畫廊這類陌生的文化環境中，可能因緊張而不工作；結果，牠們因本能驅使，盡興至旁若無人，反倒陷觀眾於一種尷尬的情景中。環境轉換的結果，暴露的不是豬的不適應，而是人的局限性。徐冰指出：「那兩隻完全沒有人為意識，身上卻帶著『文明痕跡』的生靈，以其最本能的方式『交流』著。這件作品給人們提供了一個反思場所，觀眾看著兩頭豬的行為，想的是人的事情。」在此，藝術家把養豬的過程看成了一個「有關社會科學的動物試驗的過程」。

At the end of 1993, Xu Bing conceived of a new art project, in response to an invitation from the Reina Sofia Museum of Art in Spain, to submit a proposal for an exhibition in 1994. It would be a conceptual artwork with a pig as protagonist. Because of his interlude as a peasant worker early in life, he had experience raising pigs. He decided to return to Beijing to embark on preliminary experiments.

He partnered with Fengliang Pig Farm in Beijing, and borrowed space to conduct his experiment at Hanmo Art Center, one of China's first private non-profit organizations, located in downtown Beijing's Wangfujing district. Originally, he intended to do the experiment and record data behind closed doors, but on the advice of friends he allowed colleagues in Beijing's art circles to visit and observe. Ultimately, on the afternoon of January 8, 1994, more than 200 people were on hand to view the proceedings.

In the center of the exhibition space, he built a 5 square-meter pigpen, filling the floor with a thick layer of printed materials in various languages. When the exhibition opened, two pigs with text printed on them – a boar with fake English and a sow with fake Chinese – moved around, went into heat and mated in the exhibition space. Xu titled the project *A Case Study of Transference*.

An interesting discovery was that, contrary to his initial concerns that the pigs would be nervous in the unfamiliar cultural habitat of an art gallery and refuse to perform, they were in fact driven by instinct and ignored the human spectators in their excitement. Indeed, it was the viewers who felt embarrassed by the scene. The result of this environmental transference was that it exposed not the pigs' inability to adapt, but the restricted nature of human beings. Xu Bing observed: "Those two living creatures without any



《文化動物》表演/綜合媒材裝置，北京翰墨藝術中心
Cultural Animal performance with pig and mannequin
Han Mo Arts Center, Beijing, 1994

在實驗過程中，豬的「自然行為」引發徐冰的興趣。開放實驗展的第二天，他嘗試將一個預先翻製好，身上印滿偽漢字，抹了母豬氣味的等身假人，和公豬一起放進柵欄內。結果，證實豬的性愛反應係由嗅覺引起，是母豬的氣味誘發公豬的衝動，與豬的視覺無關。

通過公豬對假人的反應，徐冰測驗了豬的敏感性，並期待戲劇性的偶發、荒誕效果。透過該次展出，豬對假人強烈的性反應被記錄下來，成了《文化動物》這件作品。過程中，徐冰邀請好友艾未未製作錄影紀錄，其中的人物塑像則以徐冰本人為藍本——這些圖片直到1998年後才拿出來發表。

1994年1月10日，徐冰將實驗的紀錄帶回紐約。當時，西方媒體對此事已經有所反映，索菲亞皇后美術館最終沒有接受徐冰以活豬演出的計畫，只在展覽畫冊上印了圖片。儘管如此，徐冰在一年後進行二度實驗，並將公豬和母豬身上的偽中英文字做了對換。此後，《一個轉換案例的研究》便以投影的方式，在許多地方展出；在紐約、慕尼黑和愛爾蘭等地，也曾做過活豬的演出。

無論如何，《一個轉換案例的研究》和《文化動物》都製造了一種「奇觀」，凸顯尷尬和荒誕的情境效果。藝術家讓活豬或假人印滿了偽漢字和偽英文，意有所指；此舉影射的「交流」關係，是以「荒謬劇」的型態上演，而且充滿非理性和暴力的弦外之音。

artificial consciousness, whose bodies were labeled with the 'marks of civilization,' engaged in 'exchange' according to their most basic instinct. This work gave people a setting for contemplation. The viewers watched the behavior of two pigs, but what they thought about was human affairs." Here, the artist viewed his past experiences raising pigs as a "process of experimentation with animals, related to social science."

During the experimental process, the "natural behavior" of the pigs raised Xu's interest. On the second day of the experimental exhibition, he placed a human-like mannequin in the pen with the boar. Manufactured in advance, the mannequin had fake Chinese characters printed on its body and was smeared with the scent of the real sow. The result proved that pigs' erotic responses are triggered by their sense of smell. It was the sow's scent that set the boar in motion, not any visual stimulation.

Through the boar's response to the mannequin, Xu Bing tested the pig's level of sensitivity, anticipating dramatic, spontaneous and absurd results. During the exhibition, the pig's fervent sexual response to the mannequin was recorded and became the work *Cultural Animal*. During the process Xu Bing invited his friend Ai Weiwei to make a video documentary. The human mannequin was actually modeled on Xu Bing himself. It was not until 1998 that these images were released.

On January 10, 1994, Xu carried the documentation of his experiment back to New York. At the time some reactions to the event had already appeared in the Western media. The Reina Sofia Museum of Art ultimately declined Xu's request for live pigs as part of his exhibition and only printed pictures of the experiment in the exhibition catalogue. Be that as it may, a year later Xu embarked on a second experiment, this time switching the fake Chinese and English printing on the male and female pigs. Later, he was able to exhibit *A Case Study of Transference* in many places, in the form of video projection. He also performed live exhibitions of pigs in New York, Munich and Ireland.

Regardless of how they were achieved, both *A Case Study of Transference* and *Cultural Animal* created a spectacle, throwing a spotlight on the resulting embarrassing, ludicrous situations. When the artist printed false Chinese or English text on the live pigs and the mannequin, he clearly did so to convey a message: The relationship of "exchange" projected here was unmistakably acted out in the form of "theater of the absurd," filled with irrational and violent dissonance.

12 轉話

Telephone

1996–2006

多種語言的連鎖翻譯 Multiple languages translation



不同語言之間，是否可能真正轉換，同時，可轉換的程度如何？這是徐冰旅美之後逐漸感興趣的議題，而《轉話》正是一個這樣的實驗計畫。徐冰的做法是：從一篇中文開始，先譯成英文，英文譯成法文，法文譯成俄文；準此模式，繼續轉譯至德文、西班牙文、日文、泰文，再從泰文譯回中文。最後，將前後兩篇中文做對比，看看與原文的出入有多大。

轉譯的過程中，也許造成原義面目全非，但也可能原文和譯文之間，仍維持了可能的溝通關係。如果是後者，至少可以說明，我們長久以來所仰賴的「翻譯」這件事，還是有可信的基礎。

《轉話》最初由徐冰和紐約策展人扎亞(Octavio Zaya)在1996年開始進行；之後，並沒有繼續發展，因為扎亞聽說有另一位藝術家正在做同樣的事。因此，徐冰只好停止。然而，多年來，他查遍網站和多方詢問，並未看到類似的作品出現。

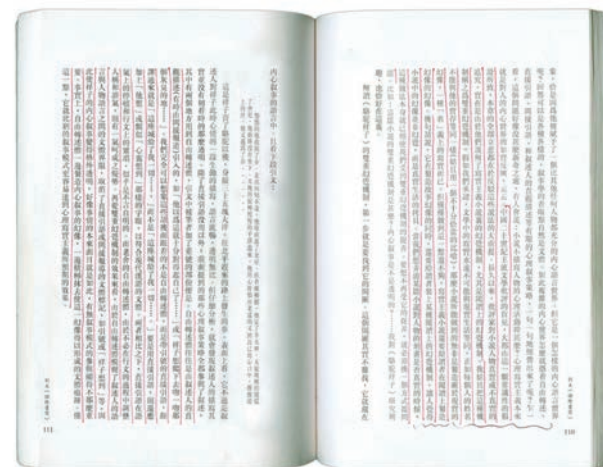
直到2005年，徐冰擔任中國大陸版的《生活》(City Magazine)雜誌藝術總監，《轉話》才在2006年一期以「翻譯」為主題的專號中刊登，實現他心懸多年的計畫。在為《生活》雜誌所寫的專欄短文中，徐冰提到：「美國有一個遊戲叫『Telephone』(打電話)，一句話你傳我，我傳你，看後來傳成什麼樣子……這種遊戲的方法也被用在美國大學或研

Can different languages truly be converted one to another? To what degree are they convertible? This was the subject that Xu Bing gradually became interested in after moving to the United States. *Telephone* was an experimental project exploring this topic. Xu pursued the following method: He started with a passage of Chinese and first had it translated into English. From English it was translated into French, and from French into Russian. Following this model, he had it translated into German, Spanish, Japanese and Thai, and from Thai back into Chinese. Finally, he compared the original and the ultimate Chinese versions, to see how greatly they differed.

Through this process of transference, it was possible that the original meaning would be completely obliterated, but a relationship of communication could also be maintained between the source and the target versions. If the latter scenario were the case, it would at least attest that the act of translation, on which we have long relied, has a trustworthy foundation.

Telephone was first initiated by Xu Bing and the New York curator Octavio Zaya in 1996. Later, the project was discontinued, because Zaya said that a different artist was doing the same thing. Nevertheless, several years later, Xu searched the Internet and made several inquiries, but could find no evidence that such a work had appeared.

Then in 2005, Xu Bing accepted the position of art director of Chinese-language *City Magazine*, and the work *Telephone* appeared in a 2006 issue as a feature on the topic of "Translation," allowing him to accomplish the project that had been suspended in his mind for

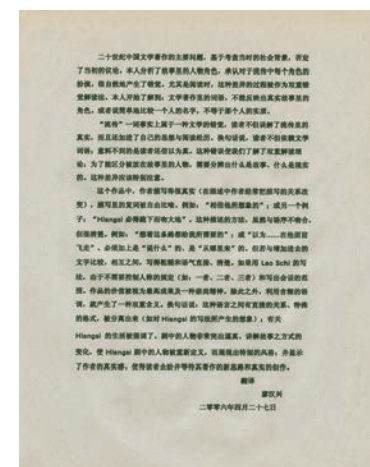


第一篇中文 Original version: Chinese

究機構的教學中……實驗測試的是傳遞與接受之間的誤差度。討論的是管理者如何有效地傳達指令。翻譯的技術也是傳達法的技術。」

《轉話》的文本摘自美國紐約哥倫比亞大學華裔教授劉禾女士所著的《語際書寫——現代思想史寫作批判綱要》(1997)第四章裡，以老舍《駱駝祥子》小說為論例，所做的兩段討論。實際上，劉禾該書即是以跨文化、跨語言為題，尤其針對「翻譯」的可能性，進行學術探討。

有趣的是，徐冰原本想在劉禾的論述中，尋找「那種氾濫於許多理論寫作中拗口的論述」；結果，卻發現「她的寫作風格清晰、簡潔，很難找到易被誤讀的地方。」於是，反過來想，徐冰指出，「以一個正常的文本為起點，才能證明實驗的可靠性。」如此，劉禾的中文論述成了《轉話》轉譯的原始文本。



第九篇中文 Ninth version: Chinese

many years. In the article he wrote for *City Magazine*, Xu stated: "In America there's a game called 'Telephone.' You say a sentence to me, and I tell it to you, and we see what it eventually turns into. This game has been used in the teaching programs at American universities or research institutes... to test the degree of misunderstanding between transmission and reception. What they're trying to learn is how managers can effectively convey orders. The techniques of translation are also the techniques of conveying information."

For the text of *Telephone*, Xu chose two paragraphs analyzing Lao She's novel *Camel Xiangzi*, excerpted from Chapter 4 of *Cross-Writing: Critical Perspectives on Narratives of Modern Intellectual History* (1997) by Lydia H. Liu, an ethnic Chinese professor at Columbia University in New York. In fact, the book by Lydia Liu was itself an academic discussion of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic issues, particularly the possibilities of translation.

Interestingly, Xu Bing originally expected Lydia Liu's essay to contain "that kind of prolix exposition that overflows from many theoretical writings." In fact, he discovered "the writing style was very lucid and straightforward – it was hard to find a place that was easily misunderstood." However, when he thought it over, he concluded, "Using a normal text as a starting point was the only way to prove the reliability of the experiment." Thus, Liu's essay became the original text for *Telephone*.

13 蠶花與蠶系列作品 Silkworm Series 1994–2001

徐冰於紐約東村工作室 Xu Bing at East Valley Studio, 1995



蠶是徐冰以動物為題材的另一個重要系列的主角。從1994年起，他連續幾年定期在夏季養蠶，並發展成創作計畫。在美國養蠶，一方面緣起於徐冰兒時養蠶記憶的呼喚；如今，他身為藝術家，對蠶的文化意味——絲綢文化的象徵——以及蠶的蛻變現象，更感興趣。

最初，徐冰透過美國兒童教材的供應商，買到從日本進口的蠶。因為不習慣日本蠶，為了1995年在麻州藝術學院(Massachusetts College of Art)的展出，他特別申請從中國合法進口蠶到美國。

徐冰在養蠶的筆記中寫道：「讓蠶在一本比較大的書上吐絲。在展覽完成，蠶給人不舒服之感，又給人很乾淨之展。蠶的動作很慢，感覺很傷感深遠。大書內容是我製作的英文(天書)。方式：保持書面很乾淨，銀絲繁密之感，很乾淨，很抒情。」這就是《在美國養蠶系列一：蠶書》(1994–95)的設想之一。

雖然沒有真的讓蠶在英文天書上吐絲，徐冰卻找來各種現成的印刷物，其類型包括：聖經、英文字典、空白書、報紙，電腦印表紙等。後來，連毛主席的語錄也是對象。以《蠶書》為例，徐冰在攤開的頁面上鋪了桑葉，任蠶啃食並排泄；而後，蠶在頁面吐絲，有的甚至結繭。善用蠶成長過程的多階段變化，他甚至讓蛻變且交配過後的蠶蛾在空白的書頁上，產下細密微小的黑卵；再等卵孵化之後，目睹初生的蠶爬離書面。

徐冰先是以書或印刷物做為蠶的主要場域。稍後，他更將領域延展至具有當代科技表徵的電腦上。將蠶與電腦並置，強化軟體動物的原始生命形態與高科技年代電子機械產物的對立性。蠶的

Silkworms are another major species of animal that Xu Bing has made the subject of his artwork. From 1994 onward he raised silkworms every summer, and developed the practice into an art project. He raised silkworms in the United States, partly because of his memories of raising them as a child. Today, as an artist, he also maintains an interest in the silkworm's cultural implications – as a symbol of textile culture – as well as the phenomenon of metamorphosis.

At first, Xu procured some silkworms imported from Japan, through a supplier of children's education materials. Because he was unaccustomed to Japanese silkworms, he specially applied to legally import Chinese silkworms to the US, for exhibition at the Massachusetts College of Art.

In a notebook he kept on silkworm husbandry, he wrote: "I'll have the silkworms secrete silk on a fairly large book. In the exhibition, the silkworms should make people feel uncomfortable, but the display should be clean. The silkworms will move slowly, very emotional and profound. The book's content will be English I create (*Book from the Sky*). Method: Keep the surface of the book clean. The silk should feel dense, clean, expressive." This was one of his conceptual notes for *American Silkworm Series I: Silkworm Books* (1994–5).

Although Xu never really did place silkworms on an English version of *Book from the Sky*, he did gather a variety of readymade printed materials, including bibles, English dictionaries, blank books, newspapers and computer printouts. Later, he even used the Quotations from Chairman Mao. Xu would open up a book to a certain page and spread out mulberry leaves, which the silkworms would eat and excrete. Later, they would secrete silk, and some would even spin cocoons. Making good use of the many stages in the insects' growth process, he even allowed them to metamorphose and mate and remain as moths on the



在美國養蠶系列三：開幕式 *American Silkworm Series 3: The Opening* 左：開幕式，右：閉幕式 Left: initial state; right: final state
Exhibited at Bard College Center for Curatorial Studies, New York, 1998

成長生態，看似柔弱，甚至骯髒，一旦吐絲，其結成的張面，卻又潔淨且強韌無比。相較於電腦機件的剛硬與冷峻，蠶更像展現了一種以柔克剛的自然本能。

1998年，徐冰在紐約「巴爾德策展研究學院」(Bard College Center for Curatorial Studies)的美術館發表《在美國養蠶系列三：開幕式》(*American Silkworm Series 3: The Opening*)。大廳中央，以新鮮桑樹枝插成的一瓶巨大花束上，幾百條蠶在枝上啃食桑葉。開幕式之後，茂盛的桑葉經過啃食，只留下枝幹；隨後，蠶群在枝幹上吐絲做繭。展覽期間，金、銀色的蠶繭逐漸佈滿枝幹——此時，「蠶花」亦如「殘花」。這瓶花束也由蔥綠茂盛轉化為另外一種豔麗的景觀。

蠶花這件作品的手段雖然簡單，卻寓涵深刻的哲學內涵。藉此，藝術家表現了希望用東方思維的方式去處理當代藝術的願望。事物的不確定性，以及概念、界限的漸變，這一直是徐冰藝術感興趣的內容。



徐冰(左)與兄姊 Xu Bing (left) with sister and brother, 1956

book pages, producing tiny black eggs. When the eggs hatched, new silkworms would crawl out of the pages of the book.

Xu first made books or other publications the habitat for his silkworms. A little later, he expanded this to include computers – symbols of contemporary technology. By juxtaposing silkworms and computers, he underscored the oppositional state of primitive invertebrate life forms and the electromechanical products of the high-tech era. When they are growing, silkworms seem to be soft and filthy. Yet as soon as they secrete silk, they form faces that are quite clean, but very strong and tough. Contrasted with rigid, cold computer parts, silkworms seem to evince a natural instinct of the soft to overcome the hard.

In 1998 Xu presented *American Silkworm Series 3: The Opening* at the Bard College Center for Curatorial Studies. In the middle of a big hall, he inserted fresh mulberry branches into a large flower vase. Several hundred silkworms chewed on the mulberry leaves. The branches, at first flourishing with leaves, were gnawed bare, and a swarm of silkworms began spinning cocoons on the trunk. During the exhibition, golden and silver cocoons gradually covered the trunk and branches, transforming their verdure into a different scene of vivid color.

While this work employs simple methods, it also embodies deep philosophical implications. Here, the artist attempts to treat the art in a mode reflective of Eastern thought. The uncertainty of things and the gradual shifting of concepts and boundaries have long been sources of fascination for Xu Bing.

14 英文方塊字書法與教室 Square Word Calligraphy and the Classroom 1994–2012

新英文輸入法入門 *An Introduction to New English Calligraphy*
1995–1998 綜合媒材裝置 *Mixed media installation*
台北市立美術館收藏 *Collection of Taipei Fine Arts Museum*
北美館展出 *Installation at Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2014*



初到美國，面對語言和溝通的問題，一度造成徐冰生活上的尷尬。在2011年一篇回顧《英文方塊字》的文章裡，他提到面對英語環境的挫折：「你的思維能力是成熟的，而說話與表達的能力是幼兒的……你是受尊重的藝術家，但在那個語境裡，在這一點上可以說是一個文盲。」

在中國的時候，徐冰已經做過和中文有關的創作；到美國之後，他也針對英文進行嘗試。稍早已見的《A, B, C...》(1991)和《My Book》(1992)都是這一類的實驗；雖然徐冰覺得沒有很成功，卻都成了他「了解不同語言特性」的助力。他寫道：「對不同語言文字內核的了解，幫助你了解文化的不同，這種不同變為我幻想把他們『嫁接』的能力。」

1993年起，徐冰開始發展《英文方塊字》計畫。他說：「如果我一直生活在大陸，一定不會有這件作品的出現，因為文化的衝突不會那麼直接，對我也不構成『要命』的問題。」和《天書》的「偽文字」不同，《英文方塊字》是可閱讀的「真文字」。

徐冰形容自己「像是異想天開的配種專家，非要把壓根就不是一個基因系譜的物種，讓他們雜交，弄出一種四不像的新『物種』來。」而「英文方塊字」就是「把中文、英文這兩種截然不同的書寫體系硬是給弄在一塊兒，就像包辦婚姻，不合適也得合適。」在做法上，他將中國的書法藝術和英文的字母書寫做了結合。「我通過這種英文書法，讓西方有了一種東方形式的書法文化……這種字是介於兩個概念之間的，哪邊都屬於又都不屬於；人們在書寫時，真不知道是在寫中文還是英文」，徐冰這麼說。

When he first went to the US, Xu Bing had communication problems, making his life awkward for a time. In a 2011 article looking back on the work *Square Word Calligraphy*, he recalled the linguistic frustrations of that time: “Your thinking ability is mature, but you have the speaking and expressive abilities of a child... You’re a respected artist, but in that linguistic context, it’s as if you’re illiterate.”

In China Xu had already produced artworks related to Chinese. After he arrived in America, he experimented with ways to address the English language. These included *A, B, C...* (1991) and *My Book* (1992), which we have already seen. Although he did not feel they were particularly successful, they helped him “understand the special character of a different language.” He wrote: “Understanding the inner core of a different language helps you understand a different culture. This difference led me to fantasize about being able to ‘wed’ them.”

In 1993 Xu Bing began developing the project *Square Word Calligraphy*. He said: “If I had always lived in the mainland, this work would definitely never have appeared, because the cultural conflict wouldn’t have been so direct. And it wouldn’t have become such a ‘vital’ problem for me.” Unlike *Book from the Sky*, comprised of “false characters,” *Square Word Calligraphy* contained “real text” that could be read.

Xu describes himself as being “like a fanciful breeding specialist. I definitely wanted to avoid producing a pedigree strain. I wanted them to mix and produce a completely different ‘species.’” Thus, Square Word Calligraphy “put together two utterly different systems of calligraphy, Chinese and English. Like an arranged marriage – even if they didn’t fit, they had to fit.” His method was to combine Chinese calligraphy and English lettering. “Through this kind of English calligraphy, I gave the West a calligraphic culture with



《英文方塊字書法》教科書 *Textbook from An Introduction to Square Word Calligraphy*

也稱為「徐氏新英文書法」，「英文方塊字」是徐冰設計出來的貌似中文，實際卻是英文的新書寫形式。透過裝置藝術的手段，他把畫廊或美術館的現場改為教室：「教室裡有課桌椅，有黑板，有電視教學設備，有教學掛圖，有教科書，有筆、墨、紙、硯。觀眾進入一間『中文書法教室』，但參與書寫後發現，實際上是在寫……英文。」

為了書法教室，他製作了《英文方塊字書法》教科書和《英文方塊字教學》錄影帶，以及傳統書法訓練所用的《描紅練習本》。觀眾來到展廳，便進入了一個學習的場所。不管是華人或西方人，面對這些來自「英語文化的東方書法」，都是非常特殊且前所未有的經驗。

1998年，台北市立美術館舉辦「台北雙年展」，亦邀請徐冰的「英文方塊字書法教室」在本館展出；後來更成為館方的典藏品(那時定名為《新英文輸入法入門》(1995–1998))。因應此次回顧展的盛會，館方亦展出此作，期待觀眾踴躍參與——除了認識英文方塊字，亦可體驗「新英文書法」的趣味。此外，徐冰研發方塊字及教材的一些手稿和製作工具，也在此次展出之列。

徐冰寫道：「當代藝術的新鮮血液經常是來自於藝術之外。《英文方塊字》的實用性和在藝術之外的可繁殖性，是我很喜歡的部分。」就在這種既熟悉又陌生的轉換中，人們對文化的舊有概念受到挑戰，從而打開更多思維的空間，藉以找回認知的原點。2010年，徐冰收到澳洲教育部來信，希望獲得他允許，將「英文方塊字」放入澳洲新設定的

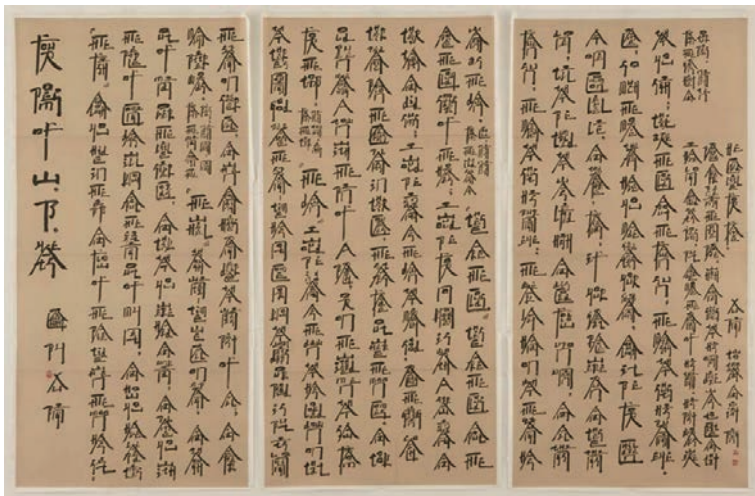


an Eastern form... This text is suspended between two concepts. It belongs, and yet doesn't belong, to both sides. When people write it, they really don't know whether they're writing Chinese or English,” Xu says.

“Square Word Calligraphy,” which he also called “Xu’s New English Calligraphy,” was a new form that looked Chinese but was really English. He presented it in the form of an installation, changing an art gallery or museum into a classroom: “In the classroom were desks and chairs, a blackboard, television equipment, instructional charts, textbooks, brushes, ink, paper and inkstones. Visitors would enter a ‘Chinese Calligraphy Classroom,’ but after taking part, they’d discover they were really learning to write... English.”

For his calligraphy classroom, Xu produced textbooks, a videotape, and traditional *tracing books*. Visitors arriving at the exhibition site entered a place of learning. Both ethnic Chinese and Westerners, when confronted with this “Oriental calligraphy for English culture,” had a special experience like none other before.

In 1998 Taipei Fine Arts Museum invited Xu Bing to exhibit Square Calligraphy Classroom as part of the Taipei Biennial. It later became part of the museum’s official collection. (At the time it was called *Introduction to New English Calligraphy* (1995–1998).) As part of the current solo exhibition, the work is being re-exhibited, in the hope that many members of the public will enthusiastically take part, not only becoming acquainted with “Square Word Calligraphy,” but also enjoying the interesting experience of writing it. Additionally, drafts and production tools used by Xu while developing his teaching materials will also be on display.



葉慈四首詩

Four Poems of W.B. Yeats 2008

墨、紙 Ink on paper 345 x 161 (3)

私人收藏 Private collection

「智商測定系統」中。據說，國際上也有一些思維或腦科學實驗室，以「英文方塊字」為實驗內容，嘗試了解吾人已經形成的生理思維系統，在面對這類「概念混淆」的書寫時，到底如何運作。

「英文方塊字」的書寫系統建立之後，徐冰也經常應用於自己的書法創作。連同書法教室一起展出的，就有幾件徐冰近期的作品，包括《葉慈四首詩》(2008)和《春江花月夜》(2008)。前者書寫曾獲「諾貝爾文學」的愛爾蘭詩人葉慈(William Butler Yeats, 1865–1939)的作品；後者以中國初唐詩人張若虛(約660–約720)的經典名作為文本，據其英譯版寫成。

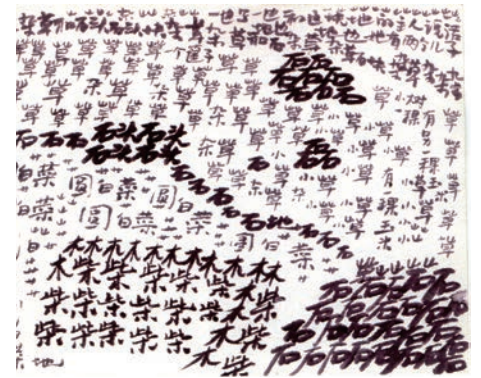
值得一提的是，美國著名的麥克阿瑟「天才獎」也因為看到徐冰的「原創性、創造力、個人方向」，連同他對社會以及在書法和版畫藝術上的貢獻能力，特別於1999年給予獎勵。

“In contemporary art, new blood often comes from outside of art,” Xu wrote. “The utility and reproducibility of *Square Word Calligraphy* is the part I really like.” In this conversion, at once familiar and unfamiliar, people’s customary concepts of culture are challenged, and this creates room for greater thought, allowing them to rediscover the origins of cognition. In 2010 Xu received a request from Australia’s Ministry of Education to include Square Word Calligraphy in a new IQ test. International cognitive scientists are also using Square Word Calligraphy in experiments to determine how people’s psychophysiological systems process such “conceptual obfuscation.”

Since developing the Square Word Calligraphy system, Xu has employed it in his own calligraphy. Displayed in his Calligraphy Classroom are a few of Xu’s own works, including *Four Poems by W.B. Yeats* (2008) and *Spring River Flowing Moonlight* (2008). The former are works by the Irish Nobel laureate William Butler Yeats (1865–1939); the latter is an English translation of a classic Chinese text by the early Tang poet Zhang Ruoxu (ca. 660–ca. 720).

Worth mentioning is that in 1999 the prestigious MacArthur Foundation of the United States gave Xu a “Genius Grant” (MacArthur Fellowship) in recognition of his “originality, creativity, self-direction, and capacity to contribute importantly to society, particularly in printmaking and calligraphy.”

15 讀風景—《文字寫生》系列 Landscript 1999–2013



「喜馬拉雅計畫」寫生 *Himalayan Sketch*

1999 墨、紙 Ink on Nepalese paper, 21.4 x 28 cm

1999年，徐冰偕同其他五位受邀的國際藝術家，參與芬蘭國立加斯馬當代美術館(Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art；位於首都赫爾辛基中心區)策劃的「喜馬拉雅計畫」(全名：“Delicate Balance: Six Routes to the Himalayas”(微妙平衡：通往喜馬拉雅山的六種途徑))。過程中，他們前往尼泊爾，在喜馬拉雅山區「深入生活」了一個月的時間。

此一計畫讓徐冰重新拿起本子，做了一些「寫生」。而這些「寫生」確如中文所指，是徐冰以「文字」所寫的「圖畫」。他坐在山上，面對真山寫「山」。所謂寫「山」，其實也是畫山，因為中國文字寫山畫山是同一回事；而且，中文的「山」字就是「山」的象形。當時，徐冰的想法是：藉此手段，他可以將書法和繪畫史上，有關風格和概念的討論通通忘掉，直接碰觸中華文化最本質也最特殊的那一部分。

中國傳統早有「書畫同源」之說，主要是從筆法風格上去討論兩者的關係。徐冰對這兩者的體會，則是偏向「符號學」意義上的關聯。以《芥子園畫傳》(最早出版於1679年)為例，徐冰覺得它就像一部「字典」，諸如「竹個點」、「松柏點」，何種山石何種皴，都是整理出來的「偏旁部首」。學生學畫亦如學字，死記硬背，熟記在心；之後，就用這些「符號」去描述萬物。

In 1999 Xu Bing, along with five other international artists, took part in the project “Delicate Balance: Six Routes to the Himalayas” curated by Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki, Finland. As part of this project, the artists traveled to Nepal and “lived deep” in the Himalayas for a month.

This project led Xu to pick up his sketchbook and paint some real life scenes. Yet he expressed these “scenes” with Chinese characters. They were “pictures” that Xu intentionally made with text. He sat on a mountain, looking at a real mountain, and wrote the Chinese word for mountain (山). (In fact, he was actually drawing a mountain, because in Chinese writing “mountain” and drawing a mountain amount to the same thing, and the Chinese word for mountain is shaped like a mountain.) At the time his thoughts were: through this method he could completely forget about the historical discussion regarding the stylistic and conceptual relationship between calligraphy and painting, and directly make contact with the most essential and the most unique part of Chinese culture.

China has long had a tradition that “calligraphy and painting have the same origins.” The relationship between the two is generally discussed in terms of brush style. Xu, however, intuited a connection akin to semiotic meaning. For example, *The Mustard Seed Garden Painting Manual* (first published in 1679) seems similar to a dictionary in Xu Bing’s eyes. The strokes required to paint bamboo or conifer trees, or which texture strokes are needed to paint which kinds of rocks, are all spelled out in a “character table.” When students learn to paint, they diligently memorize these strokes, just as if they were memorizing words. Later, they can use these “signs” to depict anything in the world.



文字寫生 *Landscript* 2013 墨、紙 Ink on Nepalese paper 80 x 367 cm



「喜馬拉雅計畫」寫生本
A sketchbook of *Landscript* for "Himalayan Project"



徐冰在喜馬拉雅山 Xu Bing in the Himalayan Mountain, 1999

徐冰用文字寫生的方法，創造了獨特的「讀風景」之法。簡單說，他將山水的視覺意象回歸至文字語法的解讀。這種語言的轉換，使觀者重新省視「山水」繪畫的傳統結構。「文字山水」同時也是對於山水繪畫形式的「語法」拆解。乍看之下，觀者所見彷彿是一個構思中的畫稿形式——山、水、樹、石等造形元素及其類型變化，均還原為「文字」書寫。如此，觀者直接面對的是畫家在思考與組構「山水」時的一套核心語法。在此，山水繪畫等同於一套根深柢固的語言結構——而徐冰以解構的方式，揭露了隱含在此一形式系統背後的思維範式。

中國文人藝術歷來就有對詩、書、畫「三絕」的美學追求，徐冰的《文字寫生》系列也可以視為另類的發想，創造了集書法、繪畫和「有形詩」(shaped poetry)於一身的新藝術體。

Xu Bing's landscape-in-script was a unique way to "read a scene." Put simply, he returned the visual images of landscapes to a form of linguistic interpretation. This kind of transliteration forces the viewer to reassess the traditional structure of landscape paintings. His *Landscript* also disassembles the syntax of landscape paintings. At first glance, the viewer seems to see a conceptual draft – such formative elements as mountains, water, trees and stones, as well as their changing categories, have all been reduced to text, expressed in calligraphy. In this way the viewer directly confronts the core syntax the artist uses when conceiving and structuring a landscape. Here, landscape paintings are a kind of deeply rooted language structure, and this method of deconstruction reveals the paradigm of thought hidden behind this formal system.

Historically, Chinese literati have pursued the "three perfections" of the arts: poetry, calligraphy and painting. Xu Bing's *Landscript* series may be seen as an alternative idea, integrating calligraphy, painting and "shaped poetry" in one new artistic unity.

16 煙草計畫 Tobacco Project 1999–2011

《虎皮地毯》1st Class

Virginia version, 2011, Approx. 1500 x 600 cm

北美館展出 Installation at Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2014



1999年，徐冰受邀至美國北卡羅萊那州的杜克大學(Duke University)演講，並擔任駐校藝術家。他還記得，自己一進入杜克大學所在的達勒姆城(Durham)，就感覺空氣中有煙草味。朋友向他介紹，杜克家族最早靠煙草事業起家，所以，該城有「煙草城」之稱；又因為杜克大學附設的醫療中心以治療癌症聞名，也是一個「醫療城」。

全世界高喊「禁煙」的今日，煙草鉅子一方面推廣煙品，又在自設的高等學府成立醫學中心，積極治療癌症，似乎不無矛盾與反諷。尤其是，舉世皆知香煙乃致癌的要因。無獨有偶，徐冰父親早年就因長期抽煙，導致肺癌病逝。因此，「煙草」的主題一下子就吸引徐冰注意。

因應2000年在杜克大學的展覽，徐冰對杜克家族和達勒姆城的煙業歷史萌生興趣，提出以煙草做為主題和創作材料，發展出《煙草計畫：達勒姆》(1999–2000)。再者，透過該校圖書館的大量史料，徐冰也了解到該家族與中國的關係——是他們最早將捲煙技術引進上海。他希望有機會也將此一計畫搬去上海展出。就在2004年，任教芝加哥大學的巫鴻教授擔任策展人，徐冰發表《煙草計畫：上海》。以上海的材料和場地為依據，徐冰提出新作，擴充了《煙草計畫》的歷史、地域和現實維度。

2011年，徐冰受邀前往維吉尼亞州，並探訪美國知名煙商菲利普·莫里斯(Philip Morris)——也是著名香煙品牌「萬寶路」(Marlboro)的母公司——位於里奇蒙城(Richmond)的製造中心。

In 1999 Xu Bing accepted an invitation to lecture at Duke University and serve as artist-in-residence. He still recalls that as soon as he arrived in Durham, North Carolina, he could smell tobacco in the air. A friend related to him that the Duke family had got its start farming tobacco, so Durham has long had a reputation as a "tobacco town." Also, because of Duke Medical Center, renowned for its cancer research, it is also a mecca of medical treatment.

Today, when the whole world clamors for tobacco to be banned, that this tobacco capital would continue to promote tobacco products but also establish an advanced medical center for cancer treatment seems quite contradictory and ironic – given the crop's carcinogenic reputation. Perhaps not so coincidentally, Xu's own father died of lung cancer after smoking for many years. Tobacco suddenly became a subject of interest for Xu Bing.

In preparation for an exhibition at Duke University to be held in 2000, Xu developed an interest in the history of the Duke family and the tobacco industry in Durham. He proposed the work *Tobacco Project: Durham* (1999–2000), adopting tobacco as both subject and medium. Moreover, through the copious historical material at the university's library, Xu discovered the relationship between the Duke clan and China – they were the first to import tobacco-rolling technology to Shanghai. This inspired in him the ambition to bring the project to Shanghai. In 2004 he released *Tobacco Project: Shanghai*, curated by Wu Hung, a professor at the University of Chicago. It featured new artworks specific to the materials and venue, broadening the dimensions of his Tobacco Project in terms of history, geography and reality.



《黃金葉書》*Tobacco Book*, Virginia version, 2011
136.5 x 101 x 9.8 cm

駐該地期間，他深入研究並了解煙草與美洲大陸及早期移民歷史的密切關聯。受在地的協助，他續以煙草進行更新的創作，也有版畫製作。同年9月，他在維吉尼亞美術館(Virginia Museum of Fine Arts)發表《煙草計畫：維吉尼亞》個展。

整個《煙草計畫》係由一系列與煙有關的製作組成。以此次本館展出的部分作品為例：《虎皮地毯》(2011)共由50多萬支香煙插製而成；展出時，仍可聞到煙草的味道。觀者繞著地毯，從一端走向另一端時，不難發現「虎皮」的顏色也隨之變化。煙草的餘味猶存，《虎皮地毯》也可視為一件誘發「嗅覺」的作品，勾喚人們對煙草的文化記憶。《黃金葉書》(2011)是一本以煙葉為材料印製的大書。《脊骨》(*Backbone*)則是根據徐冰在維吉尼亞州收集的早期煙草品牌設計樣稿製成。過程中，他邀請知名作家、導演兼製片人，同時也是徐冰好友的芮內·巴瑟爾(René Balcer)，融匯煙草的品牌詞，寫成一首詩，名字就叫《脊骨》(*Backbone*；也是早期的煙草品牌)。同時，徐冰父親生前治療肺癌的診斷書，也在展出之列。

回顧煙草經濟在近代全球歷史的發展，不僅關乎國際資本流動，也與跨國勞力市場，乃至於文化滲透的課題有關。徐冰寫道：「煙草有很強的滲透性，它無孔不入，終為灰燼，與周圍世界，與每個人都有著各種渠道的瓜葛——經濟、文化、歷史、法律、道德、信仰、時尚、生存空間、個



《脊骨》*Backbone*, Virginia version, 2011, 29 x 33 cm. 158 pages,
made in collaboration with René Balcer

In 2011 Xu accepted a short residency in Richmond, Virginia, home of Philip Morris, mother company of the famous Marlboro cigarette brand. While there, he did in-depth research on tobacco's intimate relationship with the American continent and its early immigrant history. With the help of locals, he expanded his art project on tobacco, including print works. In September of that year, he presented the solo exhibition *Tobacco Project: Virginia* at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

The entire *Tobacco Project* series was constructed from materials related to tobacco. Several examples are featured in this exhibition: *1st Class* (2011) looks like a tiger-skin rug, is made of over 500,000 cigarettes, and still smells of tobacco when on display. When the viewer walks around the work, from one end to the other, it is not hard to notice that the color of the "tiger skin" changes as well. With its lingering scent of tobacco, *1st Class* triggers the olfactory sense and evokes people's cultural memories of tobacco. *Tobacco Book* (2011) is a big book actually made of tobacco. *Backbone*, meanwhile, is a book composed of early tobacco brand designs that Xu collected in Virginia. Xu also asked his friend René Balcer, a writer, director and filmmaker, to write a blues poem incorporating tobacco brand slogans. It too is titled *Backbone* (after an early brand of tobacco). The printed diagnosis of lung cancer given Xu's father before he died is also on display.

In modern world history, the development of the tobacco economy has been linked not only to the flow of international capital, but also to multinational labor markets, and indeed the issue of cultural permeation. Xu Bing writes: "Tobacco has a powerful ability to



《煙斗》*Pipe*, 2004, 8.6 x 31 x 26.7 cm

人利益等等。」他還以「就像一個潘朵拉的盒子不斷地打開」的說法，呼應他在發展《煙草計畫》期間，國際上因為煙草經濟而引發道德上的爭議，包括：西方煙商失去在「第一世界」的經濟優勢之後，只好將生產基地和行銷轉向新興的中國大陸市場。

徐冰指出，「《煙草計畫》除了以「煙草」作為主線外，作品與作品之間沒有任何風格的考量與關聯。有些製作小巧精緻得像『珠寶』，有些巨大的控制著整個空間，讓人抓不住藝術的範圍和形式。而整個項目的語義，在眾多作品的相互襯托與『提問』中產生，使觀者的思維走得更遠。」換言之，藝術家以「提問」的方式創作，所完成的作品亦詰問各種因「煙草」衍生而出的價值與判斷問題。

「那麼，這個龐大的計畫最終要告訴人們什麼呢？」徐冰自己的回答是：「我感興趣的是，通過探討人與煙草漫長的、糾纏不清的關係，反省人類自身的問題和弱點。」



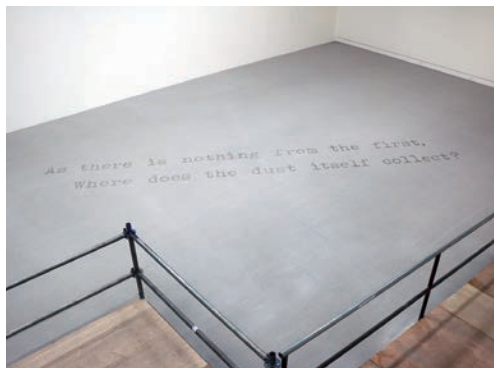
《虎皮地毯》局部 Detail of *1st Class*, Virginia version, 2011

permeate. There is no hole it cannot enter. It ends in ashes. It has many different strands of entanglement with its surrounding world, with every person – the economy, culture, history, the law, ethics, faith, fashion, living spaces, and personal interests." "It's like constantly opening a Pandora's box," he says of the ethical controversies the tobacco economy has ignited in the international community. Even in the years he was developing *Tobacco Project*, for example, Western tobacco vendors lost economic primacy in the First World and found it necessary to shift their manufacturing bases and marketing to the growing China market.

"In *Tobacco Project*, there wasn't any stylistic consideration or connection between one work and another, except for the main theme of tobacco," Xu notes. "Some works were as small and exquisite as jewels. Some huge ones dominated the entire space, so that a person couldn't grasp the scope and form of the art. And the whole meaning of an item, amidst the mutual contrast and 'interrogation' of so many works, caused the viewer's thought to roam farther afield." In other words, the artist used the works as a form of "interrogation," questioning the many values and judgments that have risen from the subject of tobacco.

"What then does this enormous project ultimately hope to tell people?" Xu offers his own answer: "What I'm interested in doing is, by exploring the long, mixed-up relationship between people and tobacco, to ruminate on the problems and weaknesses of humanity itself."

17 何處惹塵埃？ Where Does the Dust Itself Collect? 2004



北美館展出 Installation at Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2014

2001年9月11日上午，紐約曼哈頓世貿中心雙塔的恐怖爆炸事件，不但震驚全世界，也改變國際政治的生態。徐冰當時人在布魯克林自家的工作室，與曼哈頓隔河相望。工作室助理告知這個消息之後，他跑到街上，遠遠看見雙塔，像是冒著濃煙的火把。不久之後，目睹兩棟大樓先後塌陷的奇觀，徐冰腦海中突然浮現1990年他離開中國之前，北京曾經發生過的景象。「那一刻，我強烈意識到——從今天起，世界變了。」徐冰寫道。

事件之後，雙塔所在的曼哈頓下城被灰白色的粉塵覆蓋。平常就有收集「特別物件」習慣的徐冰，便在雙塔和中國城之間的地帶，收集了一包911事件的灰塵。當時，他並不知道收集這些要做什麼，只覺得其中「包含著關於生命，關於一個事件的信息。」一年過後，徐冰有機會再讀禪宗六祖慧能的經典對句：「本來無一物，何處惹塵埃。」他想起了這包灰塵；於是，開始構思一件以這些「塵埃」為核心材料的裝置作品，藉以隱喻911事件的內涵。

《何處惹塵埃？》這件作品於2002年提出，當時時機仍然敏感，沒有展覽願意接受。直到2004年，才在英國威爾斯國家博物館的「世界藝術」(Artes Mundi)入圍展中首次發表。(徐冰亦是該年度「世界藝術」的得獎人。)徐冰自己描述：「我將911事件中收集到的塵埃吹到展廳中，經過24小時落定後，展廳地面上，由灰白色的粉塵顯示出兩行中國七世紀的禪語：『本來無一物，何處惹塵埃。』(按：英文譯為：“As there is nothing from the first, / Where does the dust

The horrifying explosions of the World Trade Center's twin towers on September 11, 2001 not only shook the world, but also altered the state of international politics. At the time Xu Bing was at his home studio in Brooklyn, across the river from Manhattan. After his studio assistant told him the news, he ran into the street and saw the far-off towers, emitting thick smoke like torches. Not long afterward, he witnessed the strange spectacle of the two towers collapsing. In Xu's mind images suddenly surfaced of what happened in Beijing before he left China in 1990. "In that moment, I was powerfully conscious that from this day forward, the world had changed," Xu writes.

After the buildings' collapse, lower Manhattan was covered in grayish white dust. Xu Bing, who was in the habit of collecting "special objects," gathered a bagful of 911 dust from some place in between the twin towers and Chinatown. At the time he had no idea what he would do with it, but only felt that it "contained information about life, about an event." A year later, he was re-reading the works of Huineng, Sixth Patriarch of Chan Buddhism, and chanced upon this classic couplet: "As there is nothing from the first, / Where does the dust itself collect?" He thought of that bag of dust, and began to imagine an installation that would use dust as its core material, metaphorically referencing the 911 incident.

In 2002, when Xu began submitting proposals for the work, the trauma was still quite fresh, and no exhibition would accept it. Not until 2004 did the National Museum and Gallery of Wales include it in their exhibition for the inaugural Artes Mundi prize. (It won first place.) According to Xu: "I blew the dust from 911 all over the exhibition hall, and after it settled for 24 hours, I marked out two lines from a seventh-century Buddhist saying in the gray-white dust on the floor: 'As there is nothing from the first, / Where does the dust itself collect?' The hall was covered in an even,

itself collect?") 展廳被一層像霜一樣均勻且薄的粉塵覆蓋，有寧靜、肅穆之美，但這寧靜給人一種很深的刺痛與緊張之感；哪怕是一陣風吹過，『現狀』都會改變。」

隨同《何處惹塵埃？》裝置作品展出的，還有一組照片，表達了徐冰當時如何將這些灰塵從紐約帶往威爾斯的經過。「當我準備去威爾斯做這件裝置時，我才意識到，這包灰塵要想帶到威爾斯並非易事。」原因是，國際間並不允許將土壤、種子一類的物質，從一個大陸帶到另一個大陸——更何況是911事件的塵土。光是通過機場安檢恐怕就有困難。為此，徐冰說：「我想到用一個玩具娃娃，翻模，以粉塵代石膏，製作了一個小人形，它好像是我的一件雕塑作品——因為我是藝術家——被帶進了英國。之後，我們再將它磨成粉末，吹到展廳中。」此一過程有趣且深具意味，徐冰便把記錄的照片列為裝置的一部分，充實了《何處惹塵埃？》的主題。徐冰覺得，這件作品雖有一些「不軌」之處，卻涉及一個極其嚴肅的課題——亦即「人類太不正常的生活狀態。」

《何處惹塵埃？》發表之後，雖然獲得許多好評，英文平面和網路媒體卻大多聚焦在使用911事件的塵埃這件事上。也有收藏911事件遺物的博物館來信，詢問可否向他買一些灰塵，因為他們收藏了各種物件，就是沒有收集灰塵。徐冰覺得這件事情很有意思，因為它反映了不同文化背景下的世界觀和物質觀。徐冰指出，包括佛教、猶太教和基督教在內的世界幾大宗教，其原始教義對於「塵埃」的態度，大抵都有類似之處，譬如：「一切都從塵土而來，終要歸於塵土。(Everything comes from dust and goes back to dust.)」只不過，「今天的人類離那些最基本的命題似乎已經越來越遠。」

對徐冰而言，《何處惹塵埃？》探討的並非911事件本身，而是「精神空間與物質的關係。」他更想追問的是：「到底什麼是更永恆，更強大的？什麼是真正的力量？宗教在哪？不同教義、族群共存和相互尊重的原點在哪？這不是抽象、玄奧、學者式的命題，而是與每一個人活著相關聯的、最基本的事情，否則人類就會出問題。」

thin film like frost. It had a quiet, somber beauty, but this quiet evoked a deeply painful, anxious feeling. Even with the slightest breeze, the 'current situation' would completely change."

Along with the installation itself, Xu included a set of photographs relating the process of carrying the dust from New York to Wales. "It was only when I was getting ready to go to Wales to do this installation that it occurred to me that carrying the bag of dust all the way to Wales wouldn't be easy." The reason was because it is prohibited to carry soil or seeds from one continent to another – especially dust from the September 11th incident. Even passing through security inspection at the airport might prove difficult. Thus, Xu says, "I thought I'd use a toy doll as a mold, turn the dust into plaster and make a little figurine of it. It would be like I was carrying a little statue that I'd made – because I'm an artist – into Britain. Afterward, we would grind it into dust again, and blow it around the exhibition hall." This process, while intriguing, also has deep implications. Xu made the documentary photos part of the installation, giving the title a richer meaning. Xu Bing feels that although this piece has certain "illicit" aspects to it, it also involves an extremely serious issue – the "abnormal living state of humankind."

After its exhibition, *Where Does the Dust Itself Collect?* received many favorable reviews, but most of the English-language print and internet media focused on the use of dust from 911. One museum that collected 911 artifacts even wrote a letter asking him if they could buy some of the dust from him, because they'd collected all manner of objects, but neglected to collect any dust. Xu found this interesting, because it reflected the world views and materialistic perspectives of different cultures. Xu notes that many of the world's major religions, including Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity, have similar fundamental teachings on the subject of dust: "Everything comes from dust and goes back to dust." The only problem is, "Today people seem to be moving farther and farther away from the most basic issues of life."

For Xu, *Where Does the Dust Itself Collect?* explores not just the 911 incident, but also "the relationship between spiritual space and matter." The question he seeks to pursue is: "What is more eternal, what is stronger? What is true power? Where does religion come from? What is the source of coexistence and mutual respect among different doctrines and peoples? This isn't an abstract, mysterious, academic question. It's something extremely basic, related to everyone who's alive. Otherwise, humankind would be in big trouble."

18 背後的故事

Background Story

2004–2014

背後的故事 1 *Background Story 1*

於德國柏林東亞藝術博物館展出正面

First version, front view at Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Berlin, 2004



2004年，徐冰在德國柏林的「美國研究院」(American Academy)擔任研究員。同時，當地知名的「東亞藝術博物館」(Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst)邀請他舉行個展。《背後的故事》便是徐冰因應展出，發展出來的一個新作系列。

如前已見，針對在地特殊的文化氛圍、環境，乃至於歷史，據此發展出具備脈絡意義和對話關係的新作，這一直是徐冰重要的創作模式。《背後的故事》也沒有例外，尤其當他知道成立於1906年的柏林東亞藝術博物館，曾在二次世界大戰末期，遭蘇聯紅軍洗劫，館內90%的繪畫和其他作品受擄掠一空。根據館方的檔案照片，徐冰選了三件被搶的古畫，包括：日本安土桃山時代(1573–1603)後期，佚名畫家的一件淺絳山水屏風（約1600），以及狩野永德(1543–1590)的小幅水墨掛軸；第三件則是中國明代畫家戴進(1388–1462)所作的《松亭賀壽圖》山水掛軸。運用中國文人書畫傳統的「臨」、「仿」概念，徐冰針對三件原作的風貌，進行了創造性的再詮釋。

當時，他的做法是大膽截取原畫的局部構圖，結合個人的創意調整或再安排。改頭換面之後的畫面，仍然呼應古畫，卻變成了三件橫幅的連作。同時，他刻意將作品安排在三幅古畫當初在館內的陳列位置。此舉，也使得《背後的故事》的命名有了勾喚場所精神與歷史記憶的另一層含義。

最令人驚艷的莫過於，徐冰將繪畫改制為立體的雕塑裝置。他設計了三個燈箱，燈箱的面板由磨砂玻璃構成。隔著玻璃板，觀眾看到的是起伏的山巒、成林的樹木，以及有涼亭、舟楫點景的傳

In 2004 Xu Bing became a researcher at the American Academy in Berlin, Germany. At this time the well-known Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst (Museum of East Asian Art) in Berlin invited him to hold a solo exhibition. In response Xu developed *Background Story*.

As we have seen earlier, Xu Bing's predominate modus operandi has always been to focus on the unique cultural ambiance, ecology and history of a place, and based on this, to develop new artwork with contextual significance and a dialogue relationship. *Background Story* was no exception, especially after he learned that at the end of World War II the Soviet Red Army had ransacked the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, pillaging 90 percent of its paintings and other works. Accessing official file photos, Xu selected three old paintings that had been stolen: a landscape screen painting (ca. 1600) by an unknown Japanese painter of the latter Azuchi-Momoyama Period (1573–1603); a small hanging scroll ink painting by Kano Eitoku (1543–1590); and the hanging scroll landscape *Birthday Celebration in a Pavilion among Pine Trees* by the Ming dynasty Chinese painter Dai Jin (1388–1462). Employing the traditional Chinese literati concepts of copying and emulation, Xu Bing creatively interpreted these three original works.

At the time his method was to boldly cut out a section of the original composition and add his own creative adjustments or rearrangements. After these physical alterations, the pictures still echoed the original paintings, but they had become a horizontal triptych combining all three works. He also deliberately placed the work where the three old paintings were originally displayed, giving the work's title, *Background Story*, a different level of meaning that summoned the spirit and historical memories of the venue.



《背後的故事：煙江疊嶂圖》於北美館現地製作並展出，畫面尺寸 Pictorial size 520 x 2185 cm

Background Story: Misty Rivers and Layered Ridges, Installation at Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2014

統山水繪畫景觀。然而，實際走到玻璃板背後，見到開放式的燈箱構造時，觀眾目睹的卻是異質而怪誕的材料拼貼及組合。

原來，山水畫面背後的故事，竟然是一件件像從垃圾堆或街角撿來的破爛或廢棄物——磚塊、魚線、棉球、紙片、木棍、亂麻、雜草、樹枝，應有盡有。這些來自現實世界的殘餘物質，經過黏貼與固定之後，搭配燈管的照明，呈現為一種「光的調配」（徐冰之語）。更具體地說，在光的撫摩之下，物質材料因為造型結構的立體差異，形塑出複雜的影像烘托。再者，這些異質性的材料在磨砂玻璃正面看到的清晰程度，還取決於它們與玻璃板的距離關係，以及光源照拂的角度變化。徐冰形容：「這塊毛玻璃的作用好比空氣中『光』的切片。」

人不免會被事物的表象蒙蔽，只有努力找尋隱藏其下的真相，才可能探究其不為人所知的深層內在。誠如美國的中國藝術史學者韓文彬(Robert E. Harrist, Jr.)所言，徐冰向觀眾展示了一場如魔術般的眩目演出。藉由物質性的視覺轉化，他製造了化腐朽為神奇的如幻美感。但也因為《背後的

Most surprising of all was that Xu Bing changed the paintings into three-dimensional installations. He designed three light boxes, with faces composed of frosted glass. Standing in front of the glass, viewers saw rolling hills, forests, pavilions and boats from traditional landscape paintings. But when viewers actually walked behind the glass, they could see the open-style light box installation, a heterogeneous assemblage of peculiar objects.

It turns out the “background story” of the landscape paintings was a collection of broken or discarded objects, scavenged from garbage heaps or street corners – bricks, fishing lines, cotton balls, scraps of paper, wooden sticks, unraveled hemp, grass, twigs – anything and everything. Once they were glued together, set in place and illuminated with lamps, these surplus objects from the real world served to “deploy the light” (Xu's words). Put more concretely, when caressed by the lamps, the different three-dimensional shapes and structures of these physical materials formed a complex visual contrast. How clear these objects' shadows appeared on the other side depended on their distance from the frosted glass, and their angle relative to the lights. Xu remarks, “The matte glass acts like a slice of light in the air.”



背後的故事 16 *Background Story 16* 北美館現地製作中
Detail view, site specific, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2014

故事》刻意呈現為一個開放的劇場，觀者在嘆為觀止的視覺神往之餘，很快就會見識此一意境背後，那些由無數卑微拼湊而成的現實之景。韓文彬寫道：「通過粉碎幻影，揭開魔術的秘密，徐冰再次展示了一件藝術品如何從呆板的材料轉化為體現情感和思想的新現實，而且，非其他手段所能表達——正是這樣的轉化，讓「外表與內容」產生了動態的關聯。」

2004年之後，徐冰持續因應展出的機構與場所精神，發展《背後的故事》的創作。與2004年較有不同的是，徐冰後來不再劇烈變更原作的構圖。而且，他更多地採取放大原畫尺幅的做法。國際上，許多珍藏重要中國古畫的知名博物館，譬如中國蘇州博物館、英國大英博物館、北京故宮博物院，都曾邀請徐冰以此方式創作。截止目前為止，《背後的故事》系列已累積15件之多。針對此次台北市立美術館展出，徐冰特別根據台北國立故宮博物院的典藏，以晚明宗師董其昌(1555–1636)一卷與古人——北宋末期知名畫家王詵(1036–約1093)——對話的《煙江疊嶂圖》(約1604)，作為放大的藍本，巧妙結合本館巨型落地窗的九連屏結構，發展成一件巨幅新作——這也是《背後的故事》的第16號作品。

People can't help but be deceived by the surface appearances of things. Only by searching hard for the underlying hidden truth can one explore the deep inner levels unknown to others. As the American scholar of Chinese art history Robert E. Harrist, Jr. phrased it, Xu acted like a magician, performing an amazing trick for his audience. But he also intentionally made it a work of open theater, so that viewers, while captivated by an astonishing image, also quickly discerned that behind it lay a real scene pieced together from countless humble things. Writes Harrist: "[I]n shattering the illusion, in exposing how the magic is achieved, Xu Bing demonstrates once again how a work of art arises from the transformation of inert material into a new reality embodying feelings and ideas inexpressible through other means—a transformation that yields a dynamic relationship 'between outward appearance and inner content.'"

Since 2004 Xu has continued to develop new *Background Story* projects, reflecting the spaces and spirit of the host institutions. Unlike in 2004, however, Xu no longer makes drastic alterations to the composition of the original works. Furthermore, he frequently magnifies the scale of his works beyond that of the originals. Several prestigious international museums whose collections include Chinese paintings from antiquity, such as Suzhou Museum, the British Museum, and the Palace Museum in Beijing, have commissioned works from Xu as part of his *Background Story* series, which has grown to include 15 different installations. Xu Bing has adopted as his blueprint a classic from the National Palace Museum – the scroll painting *Misty Rivers and Layered Ridges* (ca. 1604), which the late Ming master Dong Qichang (1555–1636) created as a dialogue with the renowned late Northern Song painter Wang Shen (1036–ca. 1093). Ingeniously incorporating the museum's giant picture windows in a nine-section screen structure, this new large-scale work is the 16th installment in Xu's *Background Story* series.

19 魔毯 Magic Carpet 2006–2009

魔毯 *Magic Carpet*, 2009

粗羊毛手工地毯 Hand-woven European wool, 595 x 595 cm

Jing & Kai 機構收藏 Collection of Jing & Kai



2006年，新加坡舉辦首屆雙年展，主題是“Belief”（「信仰」）。徐冰在日籍總策劃人南條史生的邀請下，以新加坡的觀音堂佛祖廟為基地，發想新作。徐冰決定設計一塊巨大的地毯，供該寺廟在展覽期間使用。

這件命名為「魔毯」的作品，擇錄了四段不同信仰的文本，包括：禪宗六祖慧能的《壇經》、諾斯替教派(Gnosticism；融合多種信仰的神智學和哲學的宗教，一般都認為與早期基督教的淵源甚深)的〈論世界起源〉(“On the Origin of the World”)、馬克思《僱傭勞動與資本》(*Wage-Labor and Capital*; 1847)第六章的段落，以及猶太教《塔木德》(*Talmud*)法典第七書第五章關於人對自己財產的責任與權利關係之論。

受中國前秦時期(350–394)年青才女蘇惠獨創的《璇璣圖》迴文詩啟發，徐冰也運用類似的格式和概念，作為譜織《魔毯》四段不同信仰文本的風格手段。不同的是，蘇惠將自己所寫的詩句，編成一塊八寸見方的文字畫面，結合五色絲線，繡在錦緞上；如此，字字相扣，句句迴文，竟能排列組合出高達二百餘首詩，令人嘆為觀止。徐冰嘗試類似的觀念，將英譯過後的四段不同教義的段落，以英文方塊字的寫法，重新編輯、排列，組成一個邊長高達八米的巨型正方畫面。這幅與「信仰」主題相關的文字摘抄，長和寬都由26個方塊字排成，總數是676字。

徐冰自己形容，《魔毯》上的四段文字是「用正讀、反讀、迴旋讀、間隔讀等方式組合而成的一塊魔術方塊般的文字方陣。」同時，採取類似蘇惠的做

In 2006 Singapore held its first biennial, titled “Belief.” At the invitation of Japanese curator Fumio Nanjo, Xu Bing created a new work for Singapore's Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple. Xu decided to design a huge carpet, to be installed at the temple for the duration of the biennial.

Titled *Magic Carpet*, this work excerpted texts from four different belief systems: the *Platform Sutra* of Huineng, Sixth Patriarch of Chan Buddhism; *On the Origin of the World*, a scripture of Gnosticism (a syncretic religion of mysticism and philosophy, commonly viewed as an early source of Christianity); the sixth chapter of *Wage-Labor and Capital* (1847) by Karl Marx; and Book 7, Chapter 5 of the Jewish *Talmud*, a legal treatise on the relationship between the responsibilities and rights of personal property.

Inspired by the highly original palindrome poem *Xuan Ji Tu* (“Star Gauge” or “Revolving Chart”) by Su Hui, a brilliant woman poet of the Former Qin Dynasty (350–394), Xu Bing employed a similar format and concept, handweaving a *Magic Carpet* incorporating all four faith-based texts. Originally, Su Hui embroidered her own verse onto a brocade, combining threads of five different colors into an eight-inch square pattern of characters, which could be read in different directions and combinations, forming over 200 separate poems – truly an astonishing feat. Xu attempted a similar concept, synthesizing and rearranging the four selected texts, all in English translation, into one new text, transcribed as Square Word Calligraphy, and woven into a carpet eight meters in height. This pictorial abstract of texts related to the theme of “belief” was arranged in rows and columns of 26 words, for a total of 676 words.

Xu himself describes *Magic Carpet* as “a text matrix, like a Rubik's Cube, that can be read in many different ways, forward, backward, in circles or in intervals.”

法，他一樣透過不同顏色的引導，意圖讓觀者「可以讀出不同宗教典籍的段落、片語或詩句。」除此之外，徐冰指出：「為了符合佛教不能使用黑、灰、白三色的習慣，結果，這塊地毯的顏色有些中國艷俗和美國芭比娃娃系列產品的效果。」

遺憾的是，徐冰精心編製的文字地毯，卻因為廟方不容許佛教經文任人踩踏，因此，只能改在新加坡國立美術館展示。為了觀音堂的展出，徐冰靈機一動：既然不能使用經文，不如「將地毯上的文字處理成馬賽克(pixelated)的效果。」如此，完成了第二塊地毯；而且，這塊幾何化的圖形地毯還能與第一塊文字地毯呼應。然而，第二塊地毯還是沒能用在觀音堂的佛祖廟內。原因是，總策劃人南條史生有所顧慮：不希望造成寺廟方面認為，藝術家是以馬賽克的作風，來影射作品遭到審查的弦外之音。

於是，徐冰繼續設計第三個版本。他改利用字母的遊戲，結合第一塊文字地毯的色譜，讓工廠在手工毯上織出他以「Belief」這個字所題的方塊書法——不但暗示信仰與生命的關聯，更直接應對該屆雙年展的主題。展覽結束後，徐冰將這塊《魔毯》就地捐給了觀音堂。

《魔毯》在新加坡雙年展衍生的有趣插曲，以及徐冰在創作過程中，願意採取的尊重與包容的態度，明顯呼應了《魔毯》融合四種不同信仰的共容精神。同年稍後，徐冰針對這件作品的概念與精神，做了特別的說明：「我的藝術不屈從政治權勢，但我希望我的藝術尊重和屈從普通人的信仰、習俗和願望。藝術也是一種信仰，現代藝術一味地『反叛習慣動作』，反映出對其他信仰不包容的態度，這是一種保守的態度。」

此次回顧展所見的三件《魔毯》，是徐冰根據當初為新加坡雙年展而作的設計，調整並減少文字數，長寬各由20個方塊字組成，改織成六米見方版本；一同展覽的馬克賽版《魔毯》，則只有19個字格。



Also following Su Hui's example, Xu Bing introduced different colors to enable the viewer "to discern the passages, phrases or verses from different religious texts." In addition, he notes: "In accordance with Buddhist custom, we avoided using black, gray or white, and as a result this carpet has a Chinese garishness to it, or the feeling of American Barbie Doll products."

Unfortunately, because the temple would not permit anyone to walk on text from a Buddhist sutra, Xu's meticulously woven carpet had to be displayed at the National Museum of Singapore instead. For his installation at Kwan Im Temple, Xu had a sudden inspiration: If he could not quote the sutra, he would pixelate the words instead. Using this effect, he made a second carpet, with geometric patterns echoing the design of the first carpet. Yet the second carpet also could not be placed inside Kwan Im Temple, because the curator Fumio Nanjo worried that temple members might interpret the act of pixelation as an implication that the artist's work had been censored.

Consequently, Xu designed a third version. Employing a different version of his word game, he adopted the color scheme of the first carpet and had the factory weave a Square Word Calligraphy version of the word "Belief" into another handmade carpet. This not only intimated the connection between faith and life, but also directly referenced the title of the biennial. After the exhibition closed, Xu Bing donated this *Magic Carpet* to Kwan Im Temple in Singapore.

The interesting interlude of *Magic Carpet* at the Singapore Biennale and the attitude of respect and tolerance Xu showed throughout the process clearly resonates with *Magic Carpet*'s spirit of inclusiveness in blending four different faiths. A little later in the same year, Xu Bing offered a special explanation of the concept and spirit of this work: "My art doesn't submit to political authority, but I want my art to respect and yield to the faiths, customs and wishes of ordinary people. Art is also a kind of faith. Modern art's blind 'habitual behavior of rebellion' reflects an attitude of disrespect for other faiths. This is a conservative kind of attitude."

The three *Magic Carpets* in this retrospective exhibition are based on the ones originally designed for the Singapore Biennale. These versions, however, have fewer words. The first is six square meters in size, with rows and columns containing 20 squares each. The pixelated *Magic Carpet* contains only 19.

20 芥子園山水卷 Mustard Seed Garden Landscape Scroll 2010

作品局部 Detail of the scroll 墨、紙 Ink on paper, 48 x 548 cm



歷史悠久，藏有中國古代重要藝術精品的美國波士頓美術館，經過長達五年的準備之後，於2010年底，邀集10位中國大陸及旅居海外的華人藝術家，以該館豐富的中國古代藏品為對象，發表他們各自與傳統對話的創作成果。徐冰也是受邀藝術家之一。

針對波士頓美術館的邀約，徐冰選擇以該館收藏的《芥子園畫傳》善本圖譜（最早的刻本成書於清初康熙年間，即1679年）為研究對象，從2009年著手創作，此即《芥子園山水卷》。顧名思義，「芥子園」是清初文豪李漁(1610–1680)在南京的別墅名稱；《芥子園畫傳》就是出於他的贊助，由女婿沈心友出面，邀請文人畫家王槩，以晚明名家李流芳(1575–1629)的課徒畫稿為基礎，繪編而成的一部傳授繪畫技法的彩色套印圖譜。這部書的《初集》(1679)，就是以山水畫的母題為譜，共分〈樹譜〉、〈山石譜〉、〈人物屋宇譜〉和〈名家山水書譜〉四卷。之後，王槩偕其二位兄弟，繼續以《芥子園畫傳》之名，繪編《二集》和《三集》(都成書於1701年)；前者包括〈蘭譜〉、〈竹譜〉、〈梅譜〉、〈菊譜〉四卷，後者分〈花卉翎毛譜〉和〈花卉草蟲譜〉二卷。嘉慶時期(1796–1820)，《芥子園畫傳》又經書商增訂，加入乾隆時期(1736–1795)畫家丁阜的《寫真秘訣》和上官周的《晚笑堂畫傳》(1743)，出版為《四集》(1818)，以〈人物〉畫譜為內容。到了清末光緒時期(1871–1908)，畫家巢勳(1852–1917)重新臨摹與增編，並改以石版印刷發行。

還記得前面介紹過，徐冰從1999年開始發展的《文字寫生》系列嗎？他將中國文字回歸到一種視覺性——甚至象形——的表義符號。對他而言，

At the end of 2010, the historic Museum of Fine Arts, Boston unveiled a group exhibition, five years in the making. In *Fresh Ink* ten mainland Chinese or overseas Chinese artists introduced their own new works engaging in dialogue with one of the ancient Chinese masterpieces from the museum's extensive collection. Xu Bing was one of the artists.

In response to the invitation, Xu chose to study the museum's copy of *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual* (first published in 1679 during the Kangxi reign in the early Qing dynasty). He began in 2009, titling his work *Mustard Seed Garden Landscape Scroll*. Mustard Seed Garden was the name of a villa in Nanjing owned by the early Qing literary figure Li Yu (1610–1680), who subsidized the work. It was in fact Li's son-in-law Shen Xinyou who commissioned the painter Wang Gai to create an illustrated textbook on painting techniques, based on the teaching materials of Li Liufang (1575–1629), a renowned painter of the late-Ming Dynasty. The book, printed in color, became known as *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual*. Part 1 of the manual (1679) addressed the subject of landscape painting, and was divided into four volumes: "Trees," "Hills and Stones," "People and Houses," and "Selected Works of Great Landscape Painters." In 1701, Wang Gai and his two brothers produced two additional sections. Part 2 included four volumes: "Lotuses," "Bamboo," "Plums" and "Chrysanthemums," while Part 3 featured "Birds and Animals" and "Insects." During the reign of the Jiaqing emperor (1796–1820), a commercial publishing house issued a revised version of *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual*, including a Part 4, "Portraits" (1818). This incorporated material from *Secrets of Portraiture* by Ding Gao, a painter of the Qianlong era (1736–1795), as well as Shang Guanzhou's *Paintings from Wanxiao Pavilion* (1743). During the Guangxu reign (1871–1908), the painter Chao Xun (1852–1917) reproduced and reissued the manual as a series of lithograph prints.

中國繪畫最核心的部分就是「符號性」，反映了中國人的思維，看事情的方法，以及審美態度。徐冰認為，《芥子園畫傳》也有很強的典型性，因為蒐集了描繪世界萬物的各種符號，就像中文字典的「偏旁部首」。等於是說，他將《芥子園畫傳》看成一部輯錄了「各種各樣的典型範式」的繪畫辭書。

以此概念出發，將《芥子園畫傳》當做自己與傳統對話的創作文本，徐冰挪用並重組了畫譜的造形符號。過程中，他影印了這部書，剪剪貼貼地拼組出個人的佈局結構，再委託專業刻工製成一件長達八米半的大型山水手卷——一如《芥子園畫傳》雖由文人發想和繪編，刻製的工作也由專業刻工完成。徐冰指出，此舉是因為「刻工對樣稿是沒有情感因素和發揮餘地的，像印刷工具，忠實地把形象複製出來，這使得作品的組成元素更具有客觀性。」

換個方式說，《芥子園山水卷》不以筆墨技法創作，而堅持以木刻付印的方式製作，其更大的價值在於反映「中國藝術的核心部分」，「揭示出中國藝術的符號性和中國人概念化、符號化的思維方法。」從《芥子園畫傳》到《芥子園山水卷》，徐冰覺得自己也像是「把錄像倒著放一樣。」他寫道：「清代的沈心友把名家的典型範式提出來，歸到一本書裡；我是從書裡把這些典型範式又放回到山水畫中去，類似數學裡的倒推法。我的興趣在於看看『倒推』的結果是怎樣的；這種實驗可幫助我深化對中國藝術符號化特徵的理解。」



徐冰創作中 Xu Bing working on
Mustard Seed Garden Landscape Scroll, 2010

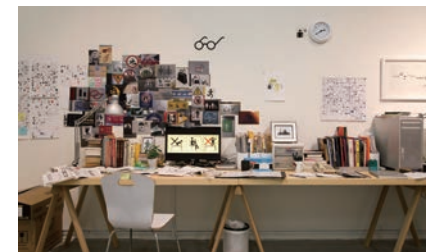
Do you still recall the *Landscape* series developed by Xu Bing in 1999, which we introduced earlier? He returned Chinese characters to a form of visual – or even pictographic – semantic symbols. For Xu, the core of Chinese painting is its “symbolic nature,” reflecting the thought of Chinese people, their way of viewing things and their aesthetic attitude. Xu considers *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual* to be strongly archetypal, because it brings together a vast array of symbols depicting the myriad of forms in the world, ordered in much the same manner that radicals are arranged in a Chinese dictionary. That is, he views *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual* as a painting dictionary, containing “an array of classic examples.”

Starting from this outlook, Xu adopted *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual* as the artistic text by which he would engage with tradition, appropriating and reassembling the forms and symbols in the manual. During the process he made copies of the book, cutting and pasting to produce a collage arranged according to his own structure. He then commissioned professional woodcarvers to produce it as an 8.5 meter landscape scroll – much like the original *Mustard Seed Garden Manual* was conceived and painted by literati and carved by professional artisans. As Xu explains, he chose this approach because “woodcarvers draw no emotional influences from the sample and have no extra room for creative expression. Like printer’s tools, they faithfully reproduce the images. This makes the element of reassembly in the work more objective.”

To put it in a different way, *Mustard Seed Garden Landscape Scroll* is not a work of brush technique, but of woodblock print. Its greater value lies in reflecting “the core of Chinese painting” and “the symbolic nature of Chinese art and the way Chinese people conceptualize and form symbols.” Xu Bing feels that going from *Manual* to *Landscape Scroll* is “like running a video backwards.” He writes: “In the Qing dynasty, Shen Xinyou collected classic examples by master painters into a book; I took these classic examples from the book and put them back into a landscape painting, like working backwards to solve a math problem. My interest lies in seeing the result of ‘working backwards.’ Such an experiment can help deepen my understanding of symbolism in Chinese art.”

21 地書 Book from the Ground 2003–2014

北美館展出 Installation at Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2014



過去20多年來，徐冰頻繁受邀展覽，很多時間都在機場和班機上度過。他注意到「機場的指示系統和機上安全說明書都是以『識圖』為主，力求用最低限度的文字說清楚一件比較複雜的事情。」徐冰說，「這些指示和說明書，可以說是人類最早的『共識』讀本，這點特別吸引我。」六、七年下來，他收集了上百張這一類的說明書，雖然當時還沒有明確的收集目的。



2003年某日，他偶然發現口香糖包裝紙上的三個小圖示（意即：口香糖吃過後，用紙包起來，丟進垃圾桶中）。這讓他想到：既然標識可以說明一件簡單的事情，是否也可以用來講一個長篇故事？於是，他透過各種管道，收集並整理世界各地的「標識語言」，也開始研究數學、化學、製圖學等專業領域的符號——這就是《地書》的起源。2011年，徐冰在討論《地書》的自述中寫道：「當今，數位網路技術迅速擴展，各類數位產品中的Icon（按：即圖像）語言大量出現，使收集整理成了一項無止境的工作。但越是這樣，我越能感到這項工作的意義所在，與此有關的思維越發活躍起來。」

整理標識語言的過程中，徐冰堅持一項原則，就是「不做任何主觀的發明和編造，因為合理的書寫系統大多是約定俗成的結果。」從這個原則去看，觀者很容易可以發覺，徐冰最新的《地書》和他20多年前《天書》的「語言」，是如何地不同，甚至天壤之別。針對兩者進行比較，徐冰指出：「事實上，這兩本書有共同之處：不管你講什麼語言，也不管你是否受過教育，它們平等對待世界上的

Over the past two decades, Xu Bing has spent much time traveling to different exhibitions. He noticed that “the design of airport signs and airline safety manuals is based on image recognition. Diagrams are employed as the primary means of communication in an attempt to explain relatively complex matters with a minimum of words. These signage systems and guides could be said to be humanity’s earliest example of ‘common knowledge’ texts – this idea particularly appealed to me.” For six or seven years, he collected over 100 safety cards, though at the time he had no specific goal.

One day in 2003 he happened to notice three small images on a chewing gum wrapper: (They mean: After you’ve finished chewing the gum, wrap it in the wrapper and throw it in the trashcan.) This made him think: If signs can explain something simple, could they tell a longer story too? He began to organize a “language of icons,” collecting logos, pictograms and insignia from around the world, as well as symbols used in specialized fields such as math, chemistry and drafting. This was the inception of *Book from the Ground*. In 2011 Xu wrote in his artist’s statement: “Today, digital technology is developing rapidly, and icon-based interface languages are appearing in countless digital products. As a result, collecting and organizing them became an endless task. But the more involved it got, the more meaningful I found the work, and the more my thoughts about it leapt to life.”

In organizing his “language of icons,” Xu insisted on one principle: “to do no subjective invention or fabrication, because most rational writing systems grow out of common practice.” This principle clearly reveals the profound contrast between Xu’s new *Book from the Ground* and his *Book from the Sky* from two decades before. Yet, Xu writes, “in truth, these two texts share something in common: regardless of your mother



地書拼貼本 Scrapbook for *Book from the Ground*, 2006

每一個人。《天書》表達了我對現存文字的遺憾，而這本《地書》則表達了我一直在尋找的普天同文的理想。我知道這個理想有點太大了，但意義在於試著去做。」

按徐冰當初的規劃，《地書》是一本可讀的小說。因為是以各類「標識語言」寫成，不管讀者出身何種文化背景，只要生活在當代，應當就能讀懂這本書。經過七年的材料收集、概念推敲、試驗、改寫、調整、推翻、重來，《地書》終於在前兩年以一本有國際書號的書正式出版。配合此一計畫，他還請專人設計了「字形檔」軟體。使用者在電腦鍵盤上輸入中文或英文，螢幕上就會顯示自動轉譯的標識語言。理論上，不同語言的使用者可以藉由這套標識系統的居間轉譯，進行簡易交流。

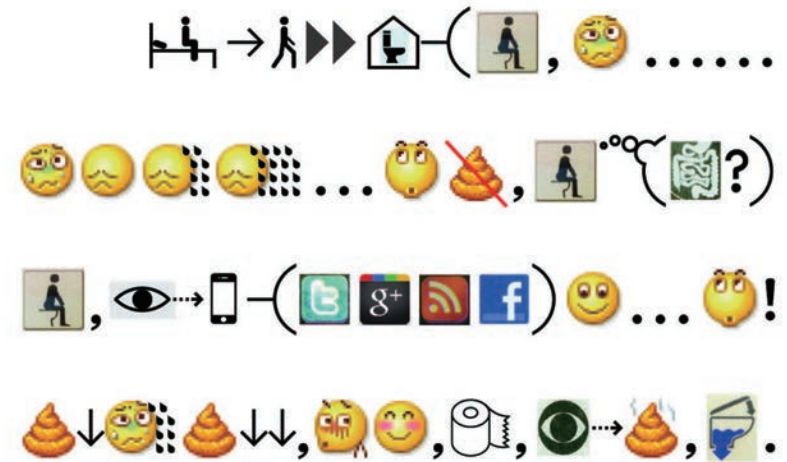
徐冰也看到，隨著全球化趨勢來臨，世界正在縮小，「地球村」的概念已經形成。他指出，「現有文字面臨著過去任何時代都未曾有過的挑戰。人類多少年來『普天同文』的願望，在今天成為切實的需要。」因應這一局勢，一種能夠「超越地域文化」的「便捷」傳達方式，也相對地受到期待。在這樣的全球語境下，徐冰積極認為，「那個『巴比倫塔』(Tower of Babel; 台灣一般譯為『巴別塔』)的意義才開始真正被激活。」在他看來，「我們今天的生活和幾千年前截然不同，但我們所使用的語言、文字卻和幾千年前是一樣的，語言、文字的滯後是顯而易見的。」

tongue or level of education, they strive to treat you equally. *Book from the Sky* was my expression of doubt about existing written languages. *Book from the Ground* is my quest for the ideal of a single script. Perhaps the idea behind this project is too ambitious, but its significance rests in making the attempt.”

Xu planned for his *Book from the Ground* to be a novel, able to be read. Because it was written in a “language of icons,” any reader should be able to understand it, regardless of their cultural background, as long as they live in the contemporary world. After seven years of data collection, concept development, experimentation, rewriting, alterations, setbacks and fresh starts, *Book from the Ground* was finally published two years ago as a formal book with its own International Standard Book Number. In coordination with this exhibition, Xu has even asked software engineers to design a font program. Users can input either Chinese or English on their keyboards, and the screen automatically displays the same text converted into icon language. In theory, users speaking different languages can engage in simple communication, using this icon system as a conversion interface.

Xu also realized that with the advent of globalization, the world is truly getting smaller, and the concept of a “global village” has already taken shape. He remarks, “Current written languages face a challenge unknown in any previous era. Humanity’s age-old dream of a ‘universal language’ has now become a pressing need.” In light of this predicament, a “convenient communicative approach” is required that can “transcend regional cultures.” Xu feels, “The significance of the Tower of Babel has only now begun to emerge. Today, our lives are radically different from those of our ancestors millennia ago, but the languages and scripts we use are the same. Clearly, both our spoken and written languages are lagging behind.”

Xu is obviously bullish about the “language of icons” he presents in *Book from the Ground*. He also observes, “Globalization has led to the increasing standardization of transnational products and consumer lifestyles, making lifestyles around the world more homogenous... Economic globalization... is driving companies to increasingly bypass local written languages and use readily recognizable ‘text-free’ images.” Regarding the development of language in the Internet age, Xu offers a not entirely glowing



地書頁面局部 Detail from *Book from the Ground*

徐冰對於《地書》所提的「標識語言」概念，明顯是自信而樂觀的。他同時觀察到，「全球化使跨國產品和消費生活日趨標準化，全球生活模式日漸相似……。經濟全球化……必然是趨向使用超越地區的閱讀語言，具有認知鮮明性的『去文字』的識圖方式。」以電腦網際網絡時代來臨之後的語文發展為例，徐冰不無批判地寫道：「人類認知方式的符號化與工作方式的『觸屏化』，一方面促使生理大腦變得懶惰與『低智化』，同時又為圖文時代製造了『易適應』的人群……。這種傾向特別反映在代表未來的新生代人群中。這代人對傳統閱讀抵觸，對直觀圖形著迷。比如，台灣火星文的現象……。另外，手機簡訊、微博、網聊等……，使精美化的現代語言向『元語言』的方向回歸。」儘管如此，「在全球一體化的需求下，圖形文字系統比其他文字系統較顯出優勢。」

《地書》展出的現場，模擬了徐冰紐約工作室的場景。有心的觀者可以詳細看到他蒐集、整理、研究，以及製作「標識語言」過程的許多原始材料和手稿。這是一個工作中的現場，實際計畫仍在繼續進行與發展中。藉此，觀者不難看出：藝術家幾乎是以製作百科全書的企圖和決心，呈現宏觀的視野，做法也幾乎是上窮碧落下黃泉。

assessment: “The increasing reliance on images for learning and touch-based interfaces for work is not only making our brains lazier and less intelligent, but also producing a population primed to adapt to a pictographic age... These tendencies are reflected especially in the younger generation, who represent the future. This generation resists traditional reading, and are drawn to intuitive images. One example is the Taiwanese phenomenon of texting in ‘Martian’ (an evolving, syncretic shorthand)... In addition, the daily use of mobile phone texting, microblogging and instant messaging are causing elaborate modern languages to devolve in the direction of ‘metalanguage.’” Be that as it may, “with the demand for global integration, pictographic writing systems hold a relative advantage over other types of writing systems.”

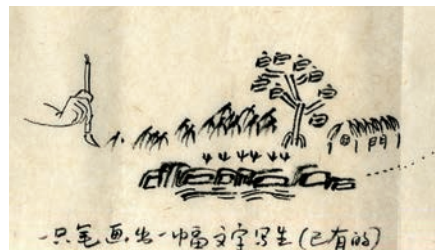
The *Book from the Ground* exhibition space is modeled after Xu Bing’s New York studio. Here, viewers can scrutinize original materials and drafts from the process of organizing and creating Xu’s “language of icons.” This is a work place with a real project in progress. The viewer can easily discern the ambition and determination of the artist to produce a work of nearly encyclopedic scope and expansive vision, drawn from sources round the world.

22 漢字的性格

The Character of Characters

2012

手稿局部 Detail draft for *The Character of Characters* 墨、紙 Ink on paper



2012年10月，美國舊金山亞洲美術館為華裔美籍青年收藏家，同時也是雅虎(Yahoo)創辦人之一的楊致遠(Jerry Yang)，舉辦其私人收藏的中國書法展。其中一件年代較早，且深具書法史意義的經典之作，就是元初書畫領袖趙孟頫(1254–1322)晚年以小楷抄寫的《大乘妙法蓮華經卷第三》(1315；全卷共有1萬5千字之多)。為此，館方特邀對中國文字深有體悟，而且，對當代藝術已有貢獻的徐冰，根據趙孟頫此卷，提出當代的創作對話。結果，徐冰選擇以動畫的形式，完成了《漢字的性格》一同展出。

《漢字的性格》以手繪的二維動畫形式創作，黑白單色為主，少數段落略加朱色勾勒，或以渲染之法，做出舊宣紙的色感。畫面維持傳統手卷的形制。從手稿發展為動畫之後，本次展出係以六部全彩投影機放大播放，畫幅寬達16米，片長16分45秒；同時，徐冰的手稿也在展出之列。因為採取橫幅長卷的格式，整部動畫也運用中國傳統慣見的散點式構圖法。全作以時間為軸線，引領觀者回顧中國文字歷史，更跨越時空，以輕鬆、談諧的風格，帶出當代中國的社會現實與人文景觀。影片以書法的「一」橫開篇，概述「一」以生萬物的中國自然觀；其次，交代中國文字的誕生；之後，闡述漢字書寫與中國人處事原則的關聯；末段則表達中國書畫特有的「複製」現象——臨、

摹、仿皆然——藉此，帶出中國人的拷貝觀和當代「山寨文化」的微妙關係。最有趣的莫過於，徐冰認為中國司空見慣的塞車現象，也與漢字書寫的行文慣性有關。

徐冰的創作素以符號、文字、語言為核心，《漢字的性格》意在揭露中國文字及其書寫如何演變為一種深層或超穩定結構，潛移默化地影響中華民族的集體潛意識、思維慣性，乃至於行為模式。看在徐冰眼裡，「中國的世界觀、自由觀；中國人的集體主義、愛面子、顧大局、重符號、崇名牌的結果；中國人消化其他文化養分的能力；中國人文化中的拷貝觀與『山寨現象』的關係等」，都與中國特殊的漢字書寫方式有關。透過《漢字的性格》動畫傳達，徐冰對這些現象的觀察呈現為一種鮮活有趣的「徐氏幽默」，不無反諷和自嘲當代「中國人」之意，也令人莞爾一笑。

西方現代以降的各種主義與思想，諸如市場經濟、社會主義、自由民主等等，看似已對中國社會產生明顯影響，徐冰卻認為，這些潮流並未對中國社會的本質起「決定性的作用」，而只是多了一種物質性的附加追求。也就是說，外來的西方價值還是「都被溶解在這個特別的，源自於漢字書寫的『文化範圍』之中。」因此，《漢字的性格》動畫片最終想要表明的是：「中國文化的內核與能量，以及在未來人類新文明建設中的利弊與作用。」

In October 2012 San Francisco's Asian Art Museum presented "Out of Character," an exhibition of Chinese calligraphy from the private collection of Yahoo co-founder Jerry Yang. One of the older and more historically significant masterpieces on display was *Lotus Sutra Volume Three* (1315), which the early Yuan artist Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322) transcribed in his later years in very small standard script characters – 15,000 in total. In light of Xu Bing's deep familiarity with the Chinese language and his contributions to contemporary art, the museum also invited him to create a contemporary work in dialogue with the classic by Zhao Mengfu. The result was *The Character of Characters*.

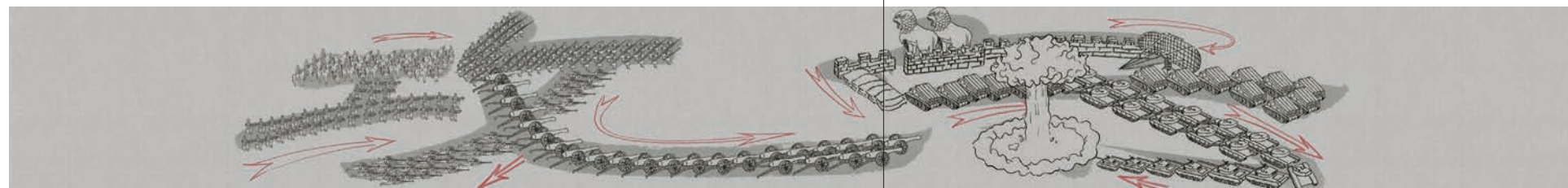
This hand-painted two-dimensional animated film appears primarily in monochrome black-and-white, but with a few segments outlined in red, or with an absorption effect producing the yellowed feel of old rice paper. The original drawings were processed as animation, maintaining the form of a traditional horizontal handscroll. *The Character of Characters* is screened at this exhibition using six full HD projectors, magnified to a width of 16 meters. The film is 16 min. 45 sec. in length. Xu's hand-painted drafts are also on display. The whole film employs an oblique perspective, commonly seen in traditional Chinese art. The narrative proceeds chronologically, recalling the history of Chinese characters, but it also transcends time and space to touch upon the social realities and cultural phenomena of contemporary China in a relaxed, humorous manner. The film begins with the Chinese character for "one" (一), introducing the Chinese cosmological concept that "one" is the source from which the myriad forms all spring. Next, it explains the birth of Chinese characters, then portrays the relationship between Chinese calligraphy and Chinese principles for living. The final segment expresses the phenomenon of "reproduction" in Chinese painting – through duplication, emulation and imitation – thus touching on the subtle relationship

between Chinese attitudes toward copying and the contemporary culture of "bandit" (generic knock-off) products. Most interestingly, Xu Bing believes that even a prosaic Chinese traffic jam is related to Chinese calligraphy.

The core of Xu's creative elements are symbols, writing and language. The purpose of *The Character of Characters* is to reveal how Chinese writing and calligraphy evolved into a deep-layered, highly stable structure, imperceptibly influencing the collective subconscious and cognitive habits of the Chinese people, even their norms of behavior. In Xu's eyes, "The Chinese worldview and sense of freedom; Chinese people's collectivism, love of face, emphasis on the big picture, tendency toward symbolism, and brand worship; Chinese people's habit of absorbing input from other cultures; Chinese culture's view of copying and its relationship to the 'bandit phenomenon'" are all related to their special form of writing. Through the animated film *The Character of Characters*, Xu presents his own unique style of ironic humor, laughing at himself and his fellow "Chinese people" to amusing effect.

Since the dawn of the modern era, various ideologies and ideas arising in the West, such as the market economy, socialism, freedom and democracy, seem to have had an undeniable influence on Chinese society. However, Xu Bing believes these intellectual trends have not had a "decisive effect" on the essence of Chinese society, but only increased the degree to which it pursues materialism. That is to say, external Western values have "all been dissolved in this special 'cultural milieu' that originates from Chinese writing." Consequently, what *The Character of Characters* ultimately seeks to express is: "the heart and power of Chinese culture, its advantages and disadvantages and its role in the new human civilization of the future."

(translated by Brent Heinrich)



動畫 Animation, 16'45"

徐冰：回顧展

Xu Bing: A Retrospective



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Curator: Chia Chi Jason Wang

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