

Frontier: Re-assessment of Post-Globalisational Politics

Duration: Mar 20th to July 31st, 2018

Location: OCAT Institute, Beijing

Participating Artists: Cai Guo-Qiang, Chang Yuhuan, Long March Project, Chen Chieh-Jen, Cheng Xinhao, Kao Jun-Honn, Guo Xi & Zhang Jianling, He An, He Xiangyu, Hong Hao, Morgan Wong, Liao Fei, Lin Ke, Liu Xiaodong, Liu Yefu, Liu Yujia, Pu Yingwei, Qin Ga, Shen Xin, Shi Qing, Song Dong, Tao Hui, Wang Bing, Wang Sishun, Wang Yin, Hsu Chia-Wei, J. P. Sniadecki & Huang Xiang & Xu Ruotao, Xu Zhen, Samson Young, Yang Maoyuan, Yang Yuanyuan, Yu Ji, Chien-Chi Chang, Zhang Yue & Bao Xiaowei, Zhao Liang, Zhao Tingyang, Zhao Yao, Zhao Zhao, Zheng Guogu, Contemporary Art from the Middle East, Zhu Yu, Zhuang Hui

Curated by Lu Mingjun

Curatorial Statement

In 1993, Cai Guo-Qiang carried out the explosive performance Project to Extend the Great Wall of China by 10,000 Meters: Project for Extraterrestrials No. 10 at Jiayu Pass. Cai Guo-Qiang intended to establish the possibility of communication with an alien planet, thereby casting aside the forced logic of East and West and following the relationship between the universe and the self to discover and explore the true space of human existence. To date, it seems no one has noticed the latent grand narrative of frontiers, history and regional politics that exists in this performance among the elements of gunpowder, the Great Wall and Jiayu Pass.

According to Owen Lattimore, the Great Wall, as the center of the Asian interior, was more than just a symbol of the division between the Chinese and the barbarians, but also a buffer permeated with trade and conflict, and a transitional zone that mixes different cultures, beliefs and politics.. Here, the Great Wall itself forms a complex social zone and political system. Unlike the boundary in the sense of modern nation-state, the frontier of the Great Wall was originally a product of the empire. Before China entered into the world order dominated by nation-state, it lacked clear boundaries. In this sense, we can see Cai Guo-Qiang' s performance as an extension of

this transitional zone, and imagine it as a metaphor for “frontier China.”

This frontier narrative naturally differs from the boundary narrative that has arisen alongside the formation of nation-state since the late 19th century, even if the former was rooted, to a certain extent, in the latter. In this process, the unstoppable waves of globalization not only failed to end history, they brought nation-states, and the conflicts between them, to the fore. Not only did frontiers of the traditional empires fail to dissolve completely, they came to provide buffer zones for existing nation states.

For a time, an equal rivalry in military strength between the two Cold War hegemonies acted as a bargaining force against global violence, but the dissolution of the Soviet Union and major changes in Eastern Europe led to a total collapse of this structure. In tandem, globalisation has evolved into an extreme mutation of the nation-state, or perhaps we have now entered into a more complex and increasingly brutal post-globalized era. This is not only the predicament of the present, but also rooted in a long, circuitous history. As a result, ethnicity, religion, frontiers and how to discuss China have again become the focus of endless debates, and strategic policies such as “One Belt, One Road” aimed at re-balancing the regional politics, economics and cultures of the world, have arisen. Correspondingly, the question of how to deeply understand the changing situation of our times, and the quest for a new subjective position and identification mechanism, have become important dimensions of contemporary art practices. Since the 1990s, and particularly in the past two years, many artists have begun regional contemplation and historical imagination through different perspectives and dimensions. This is a form of political action, and self-reflexively a deviation in artistic language. (Lu Mingjun, 2018)