

The Artist Died Yesterday

Participating Artists: Bing Bing 兵冰, Cai Duobao 蔡多宝, Thomas Charvériat, Manels Favre, Nick Hersey, Tom Lee Pettersen, Li Lingxi 李翎溪, Liu Dao 六岛, Felix Luque, Zane Mellupe, Rose Tang 罗丝唐, Wang Dongma 王东马, Wu Yandan 吴艳丹, Yang Longhai 杨龙海, Zhang Deli 张德丽, Zou Susu 邹苏苏

Curator: Zane Mellupe

Art Director: Thomas Charvériat

Exhibition: January 7th to February 19th 2009

Venue: ifa-island6, 50 Moganshan Road, building #6, 2F, Shanghai 200060, PRC

Information: <http://www.island6.org>

Obituary - Death Notice

*He came alone in a world of glitter
His art turned out to be just twitter
His thoughts were valued for no price...
He could not get a bowl of rice*

*He stood alone in a market place
And here she came – the sacred race
She bought his art – well...rather smart
For just a little more than a pound of tart*

*Oh... he praised her
Oh... She blinked
He thought -there is a magic link
Or mink?*

*He crawled behind her whining softly
She seemed to be his lifetime trophy
When stars had gone and blue was sky
He felt her thigh was kind of high*

*He tried to push
She whispered – shush
Oh no...
His soul was gone in ladies bush.*

Zane Mellupe, December 19th 2008, Shanghai

The Artist Died Yesterday

We are gathered together to mourn the loss of a dear friend, a familiar face -the Artist. He has died. In fact, he has died several times.

His deaths began with the passing of the traditional contemporary artist, for he has changed forever, never to return to our showrooms and galleries again. The expectations of his responsibilities and that which qualifies him as a creative, as an artist have changed. His world has come to an end, a new order now pervades.

The rise of the contemporary art website, and the proliferation of 'affordable art' have had an unmistakable change on people's attitudes towards art. Once upon a time contemporary art was by definition difficult, edgy and like advances in modern science, beyond the comprehension of the layman. Now the artist and his trade are part of everyday culture. The fact that there is such a thing as the celebrity artist is testament to the shift that art has made from the periphery to the centre of our cultural consciousness. The fact that the Turner Prize has been televised for the last few years also plays out this trend.

The champions of this new user friendly 'art-lite' have also changed in nature. Once traditionally educated aesthetes from the respected establishments with reputation, the new exponents of this art have diverse backgrounds not necessarily connected with the high arts. Today graphic designers, graffiti artists, sound designers, and stylists are as likely to hold shows in the classy galleries of Brick Lane or Moganshan Road as their archaic counterparts. When he dies again, it may seem like a tragedy, but this time when he dies, he can console himself with the fact that the value of his art will have increased overnight. The day before yesterday, he could not sell one of his pieces, not even heavily discounted and while swallowing shipping costs and taxes. Now his work is in high demand, and fetching 10 times the price. If only he'd thought of this sooner, he'd be a rich man. A rich, dead man.

The next time he died yesterday, he died from starvation. No longer able to support himself by selling works of art, and cast from his apartment because of failure to meet the landlord's demand for recompense, he wandered the streets, foraging among the litter bins of the commercial art scene, awaiting scraps from the table of paid commissions and lucrative patrons. Nothing fell, however, and he died hungry. His skills had become superfluous, an expendable luxury whose practice had become redundant following the rise of cheaper, more efficient copies mass produced in the nearby factories of India, Taiwan, and indeed here in Shanghai. The difference in quality was barely discernable to the untrained eye, and it was that naïve optical instrument that was now the chief market for this dying trade, as you have read above. His loss will be mourned briefly, by nostalgists and those whose hearts lie in a bygone age, but there will be no stone raised, no epitaph carved thereupon. Instead the money that the punter has saved will be splurged on cheap Cava for the private view, at which unqualified critiques will be penned by usurpers clad in fake Chanel glasses. Even though it is Dark outside. Dark, and very cold.

island6 plays an intrinsic part in the lives, and deaths, of these artists. It champions not only the traditional artists, and their quality and values, but harbors the emerging talents of graphic peddlers, techno musicians and metalworkers of unqualified stock but dynamic ability. It pits these willowy inexperienced and fresh ideas against, and alongside the experience and pedigree of its more established artists. The result is unique and exciting. As a collective and working studio, **island6** occupies a unique position amongst its commercial rivals and contemporaries, nurturing talents, supporting projects and exhibiting works that have a genuine quality and believable relativity about them.

Nick Hersey, January 2009, Shanghai