
The Components and Circuitry of Collective Art

For Liu Dao, the Shanghai-based, multidisciplinary art collective, the spirit and purpose behind all art pieces, literary contributions and exhibitions is collaboration.

With the direct aim of benefiting young Chinese contemporary artists promotionally and creatively, the founder and director of the art collective Thomas Charvériat, with the assistance of Zane Mellepe, created a production platform around a framework of mutually eclectic academic interests. The backgrounds of Liu Dao's coordinators range from sculpture, photography and digital arts, to theater direction and film studies, to Chinese literature and intellectual property law.

Finding collectivity and communal philosophy from varying collaborators is what keeps the art running above the mainstream. For this purpose, dancers, writers, painters, sculptors, photographers, filmmakers, new media artists and electrical engineers are recruited to work in Liu Dao's studio, a 24-hour facility located in island6 Arts Center where projects and tasks are continually passed and shared.

In 2006, island6 Arts Center stood as a hub for artistic investigation into human and urban interaction, showcasing research results from the global community. Urbanism and the living component within was the subject of many artworks there even before Shanghai's colossal growth was a common conversation topic around the world. Liu Dao made its first appearances in these years, when about half of island6's exhibitions discussed technology's inundation in our world, its possessiveness, uses, benefits, and authority in art, commercialism and expression.

Four years later, Liu Dao's current subjects of study have roots in those early shows at island6, but as China reaches its most extreme period of urbanization toward the end of its 11th five-year plan, Liu Dao examines more incisively the nation's cities rife with construction, architectural upheaval and modernization of infrastructure. Meanwhile, the collective nature of Liu Dao mimics the rapidity of spreading information that comes with higher concentrations of diverse people in urban areas.

These matters are more vital than ever before as technology evolves with exponential speed. Liu Dao praises machinery and its relation to humanity's synaptic makeup, and the roles of electricity in biology, emotion, behavior, and the experiencing of realities and faux-realities. Digital technology is especially embraced to communicate around the world emotions and thoughts which arise from the vivid and hectic environment of Shanghai in the 21st Century. Red Gate Gallery, the oldest private art gallery in China, describes Liu Dao's work as technology becoming organic, where "digital reality comes alive, where it begins to speak, dream, conspire, and seduce." In Liu Dao's art, matters of human consciousness and technological amalgamation are expressed with simultaneous emphasis on modernity and tradition, and on Chinese and international values. The works often feature modernized characteristics from Chinese conventions and traditional history in order to access the subject of China's reaction and contribution to Globalization. Cranes, Chinese paper cutting, rice paper, and Maoist and Communist imagery are found throughout the exhibitions.

Due to the blossoming of new media and its involvement in new Chinese art, one of the recent aims of Liu Dao is to make productions using the same process as

the film industry, with casts and credits of people with different skills. The arrangement of Liu Dao is always open to adaptation but the current art group in 2010 has six Chinese artists who come from different backgrounds, yet all have a passion for contemporary art or experience in technology-based artwork. Four artistic directors guide and facilitate the creative flow between participants. Two engineers manage any technical difficulties and are able to skillfully construct a myriad of pieces in different mediums. Various other roles are filled by rotating contributors such as camera operators, video editors, computer programmers and musicians. Actors and choreographers in the chroma key set have constant dialogues with the After Effect experts, while scriptwriters simultaneously meet voice actors in the recording studio with dubbing specialists. For these productions, Liu Dao occasionally features guest directors from outside China to help design an international and cross-cultural foundation for original ideas, bringing diversity to the works and higher sensitivity to the social and artistic influences in the global environment.

The group is always at the forefront of the Chinese contemporary artists' journey into the 21st Century, where new ideas immediately meet the traditions of thousands of years to become something previously unheard of, putting Liu Dao at a juncture between art and history that holds endless relevancy.

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