

我相信有人会带我到那个地方，但那是明天的事  
I Believe Someone Will Take Me There, But That's For Tomorrow

何岸展览

An Exhibition of He An

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Curator: Dong Bingfeng

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# He An: I Believe Someone Will Take Me There, But That's For Tomorrow

Curator: Dong Bingfeng  
2010.04.03 - 05.20

Production of Space: He An in Conversation with Dong Bingfeng

"Space is tool for production, also a tool for consumption; it's both a tool of governance and resistance."

*Body, Space and Post-Modernity*, p. 103

This dialogue attempts to portray the historical and conceptual formation of "space" and how it has been defined, to highlight the new questions generated from it, and to discuss the extension and development of the relationship between the creative artist and the specific space (real or virtual), under social changes, conflicting economical and political conditions, the rational and sensational, open and conservative, rules and aberrations, and etc.

Dong Bingfeng = DBF  
He An = HA

DBF: First of all, I would like to suggest discussing other fields and experience beyond art concerning the topic of "space". Yang Lian states in *Lies: Space of Intelligence* that "poetry" is a space of intelligence comprised of structure and imagery. Through space, poetry encapsulates natural instincts, actual sensations, historical significance and cultural structure into one. How do you make judgments on the concept or topic of "space"?

HA: The concept of space is differentiated with a line.

Theoretically speaking, within and beyond the line are two distinguished spaces, that is the reason Yang Lian's definition on poetic space strikes a cord with me. I recall a statement by German artist Joseph Bueys, "As the wind reaches a branch, there must be pain." It is also about controlling and feeling poetic space – to allow a certain connection and transmission between objects that prove the existence of space. For instance, a tree grown on the side of the road quantifies a space and thus confirms its existence. Often, the existence and extension of space are verified with time. Urban space is closely associated with the chaotic crowd and the distorted violence of individuals. They don't only exist, but are also present in the crevasse of urban space, which can also be considered its negative space.

DBF: I am going to continue this point with the American artist Mark Rothko, who believed that "space represents the malleability of real concepts for the artist." His understanding of "reality" is built upon philosophical base, especially on the practice of painting. This also explains the common view of space (although it has been constantly challenged and subverted).

Typical examples can be found in "Abstract Expressionist paintings" by Jackson Pollock (ambiguous space), Bruce Nauman (sacred space), Ad Reinhardt (non-space), and Mark Rothko, through their creative reiteration of space.

HA: Rothko's "abstract" spirit entails a depth of fate. His late works were once my guide. He has taught me the profundity of thought-space, which can be marked and guided by seemingly simple colors. I also believe space has metaphysical meanings.

DBF: Moreover, an even extreme example would be in 1958, when Parisians rushed to Iris Clert Gallery to an empty exhibit, Yves Klein's *The Void* (The Specialization of Sensibility in the Raw Material State into Stabilized Pictorial Sensibility), an incident filed as a highlight in 20th century art history.

HA: I am quite impressed that Klein adopted Zen concepts of space. In fact, this space quite two-dimensional. Interestingly, the Zen concept of “emptiness” differs from the Taoist concept of “emptiness”. The Taoist “emptiness” is closer to physical emptiness and is quite objectified. For instance, Taoism tells us, the emptiness one faces in nature, in a forest or on the beach, is one’s rapport with it. Yet the emptiness in Zen is two-dimensional, like silence in a black hole that entails one’s hopelessness. *The Void* echoes multiple dimensions, whereas the term jian, meaning gap or crevasse defines a narrow boundary. In Chinese culture, the concept of jian is overlooked, whereas in Japan, it has taken on value. Separation and distance become clearly distinguished.

DBF: Jameson believes “space exercises critical mitigating functions in building modern society” (see *Pleasure: A Political Issue*). And “place lessness” has become a key topic in the post-modern landscape. As modern capitalism expands globally, the sensation of living and traveling at any point in the world is very similar, where the production and awakening of new sensations, experiences and judgments develop into an active critical conscience or a type of “political tool” between the defined and undefined spaces.

HA: The so-called post-modern is in fact a crevasse, a gap left unconsciously from main buildings or what I call a “boundary”. Many ideologies, regional relationships, and psychological abnormalities are attached to the modern concept of space. In terms of regional space, it embodies violence and national ideologies, where the concept of space is especially pronounced in a nation, which can also be quite erotic and perverse. A seemingly congested space can be quickly devoured by another space; the two kinds of space are not closely tied together as they might have been in ancient times. Moreover, it can be appeared suddenly at the other end of time, like an “aberration.” It exists in your imagination, yet has the possibility of suddenly becoming reality, which is quite confusing and frightful.

DBF: The change in social ideology evokes the qualitative change of space. Imagine a displaced, disorderly or an intentionally constructed chaotic space that highlights subversive power relations (as Foucault has pointed out clearly that “space is the basis for exercising any forms of power”) or an intent to challenge the structure of thoughts. Such an attempt for a certain absolution is in fact an active attempt to explore the nature of space and a longing for openness. We have always existed between certain “relations”, rather than in a specific space, place or time (see Gaston Bachelard’s *Spatial Poetry*). For instance, our feelings toward art are neither structured nor forced upon us by an evenly distributed aesthetic.

HA: A rationally homogenous space is an aspiration for utopia in ancient Greece. The contemporary homogenous space is in fact the birthplace of the dialectic. In our society at present, an evenly distributed aesthetic space dose not possess any physically referential meaning. Assuming capitalist space exists in the aesthetics of the supermarket, then contemporary aesthetic space exists in the exercise of power. Relational aesthetics is the possible space offered to the individual by power and society. What we need to do is to figure out how to connect these spaces and discover and explain the relationship among them, or should we stubbornly call them crevasses?

DBF: If I recall correctly, Chinese contemporary art, or since “contemporary art” entered China, has been a process of constant experimentation and redefining of its boundaries. In the context of ideology and history, space, as the locate for artistic creation and the production of relations where artworks are displayed and exhibited, has always been viewed as a symbol of power and of the institution. What artists have done since the 1980s has been to challenge, confuse, or subvert such institutionalized power relations. Where space as specific social, economic and political relationships changes, the concept of museum space, non-exhibition space,

private space and public space is also constantly reconfigured into more complex ramifications towards a creative stance.

Following the historical chronology, it can be largely found in Shanxi's "Three Steps Studio" and Xiamen Dada's *Museum Incident* (1986), Geng Jianyi's *Waterworks* (1986), Huang Yongping's *Tolled Museum Project* (1989), Ai Weiwei's *Closed* (1993), Wang Jianwei's *Circulation – Plantation*, Zhang Peili's *Divided Space* (1995), Lin Yilin's *Safely Crossing Linhe Road* (1995), Song Dong's *Vapor* (1996), Wang Wei's *Temporary Space* (2003), Zheng Guogu's *Age of Empire* (2005-) and many other specific works or artistic events that dealt with a series of topics concerning "space", which are embedded with criticism.

HA: Aesthetics is a fluid concept in the contemporary. As for space, it is not a specific and focused subversion or challenge to power structures. A distinctive focus in a fragmented and rapidly changing society in a historical spectrum deems our subversion or challenge rather simplified and dangerous.

The gray area in contemporary culture and the temporary connection among spaces demand our attention. Relational aesthetics dose not only belong to the discourse of power, but also to the history of anthropology. Contemporaneity sometimes does not require an explanation or clear definition. It is neither a reflexive space nor an imagined space at present. Our thoughts often evolve around where these two overlaps.

DBF: Your most recent solo exhibition "Space" project on designing discreet sound, in face, coincides with the research and analysis of the extreme form (brothel) of Foucault's heterotopias and dangerous space (the 10-degree slanted floor), and becomes an imagined space that equally emphasizes exclusivity, rejection of definitions and absolute concealment, an equivalent to the differentiated reality. This "subjective space" returns the right of viewing and judging art to the audience, while completely departing from the existing concepts of exhibition space (regulated space) in museums, galleries and other art institutions. It can be said that it has endorsed the desire to resist power while protecting the vigilance of power, which I believe is an important value in this project.

HA: Well, I do not possess any desire to generalize power, especially in iterating my own view in a space. Like Zen, perhaps, rather, it simply wishes to support the existing imagination of a space by using a legend, and personally I would like to discover how space can be transferred through medium, to transform an existing power relation to an individual emotional space. At the same time, within such a space, discover how your emotions would instantly become a component of a power relation. Although, it seems helpless at least, it has granted a metaphysical meaning to the existing space of power, even it might be insignificant. Yet it attempts to connect the individual with a given space.

The difficulty for the artist is, when confronted with a space, his approach to sense and differentiate it is based on his common experience.

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Installation View



*I Believe Someone Will Take Me There, But That's For Tomorrow*  
2010  
Installation  
Dimensions variable



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Article

**ARTFORUM**  
**艺术论坛****I Believe Someone Will Take Me There, But That's For Tomorrow - Artforum****By Liang Shuhan**

Over a century ago, post-impressionist artist Paul Gauguin's *Where Do We Come From? What are We? Where are We Going?* (1897), his representation of indigenous tribes, reveals people's spiritual alienation due to the impact of European industrialized society. Thus, people were becoming fragmented and disillusioned, while a primitive aura was still dispersed to every corner of modern art.

Perhaps it is a coincidence that artist He An, who was trained as painter, seems to echo the same sentiment with another form under different context in his installation *I believe someone will take me there, but let's leave it for tomorrow* at Magician Space. The artist has appropriated the gallery as the artwork, the meaning of the work is inserted into the entire space, thereby challenging the meaning of the word "artwork". The entrance of the gallery is remodeled into a ramp and viewers need to purchase a ticket to enter (priced at 5 RMB, instead of considering it as extra revenue for the gallery, it's meant to alert viewers to the value of an artwork). After a short climb into the space, one arrives at the heart of the work: a space absent of its central gravity. The entire space is enwrapped by an invasive white color with a slanted floor. And the specific sound effect that shakes the floor imposes a disorienting effect on the viewer. Being in such an environment, the viewer's imagination could be boundless. The universal white rapid fills our visual memories, conceals our vision, or more precisely renders an artificial environment of fear, which prompts the viewer to transcend our vision. Such an experience is like staring at a clock, the impulse of our imagination disappears with the "tick tick" sound. Yet the slanted floor, and the deafening sound constantly remind the viewer that this is not a peaceful paradise, but a realm of inescapable struggle. In other words, the questions Gauguin posed have yet to be answered.

What is worth mentioning is that the title of the exhibition is printed on the exterior wall of the gallery, a place that has become a background for wedding photographs of many couples. In other words, the world will be unconsciously stored into the memories of many young people, by which adding more meaning and significance to the artwork.



About the Artist

He An

1971 Born in Wuhan, Hubei province  
1996 Graduated from Oil Painting Department of Hubei Academy of Fine Arts  
Currently lives and work in Beijing

Solo Exhibitions

- 2010 *I Believe Someone Will Take Me There, But That's For Tomorrow*, Magician Space, Beijing, CN
- 2009 *What Makes Me Understand What I Know?*, UCCA, Beijing, CN  
*What Makes Me Understand What I Know?*, Tang Contemporary Art, CIGE, Beijing, CN  
*Just Because I'm Superficial Doesn't Have to Mean You Can't Love Me*, UCCA, CIGE, Beijing, CN
- 2008 *Cheap Way of Loving Souls*, BizArt Center, Shanghai, CN
- 2003 *He An*, Chinese Arts Center, Manchester, UK
- 2000 *He An: Photography Exhibition*, Galerie Loft, Paris, FR

Group Exhibitions

- 2009 *Bourgeoisified Proletariat: Contemporary Art in Songjiang*, Songjiang Creative Studio, Shanghai, CN
- 2008 *Homesickness: Memory and Virtual Reality*, T Space, Beijing, CN  
*Off-Site Project*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK  
*Rendez-Vous 2008*, Mac-Lyon, Lyon, FR
- 2007 *Art in Motion: Chinese Contemporary Art Meets the BMW Art Cars*, Long March Space, Beijing, CN  
*The Real Thing: Contemporary Art from China*, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, UK  
*NONO: Self-Curated Exhibition of Latest Artworks by 11 Individual Artists*, Long March Project, Beijing, CN
- 2006 *Paining for Joy*, Beijing Tokyo Art Project, Beijing, CN  
*Solo Exhibition*, 2577 Creative Garden, Shanghai, CN  
*Art Game: An Experience of Agency in Contemporary Art*, He Xiangning Art Museum, Shenzhen, CN  
*City in Progress: Live from Zhangjiang*, Zhangjiang Development Zone, Shanghai, CN  
*It's All Right: Contemporary Art Exhibition*, Hu Qing Tang Museum of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Hangzhou, CN
- 2005 *Something is Happening*, Liu Lang Wen Ying Park, Hangzhou, CN  
*Interval*, Creation Loft, Hi-Shanghai, Shanghai, CN  
*True to Life*, Taikang Top Space, Beijing, CN  
*The Other Shore of This Shore: The 5th Pingyao International Photography Festival*, Pingyao, CN
- 2004 *The Exhibition of Young Artists*, Duolun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai, CN  
*DIAL 62761232 (Express Delivery Exhibition): Contemporary Art Exhibition*, BizArt Center, Shanghai, CN  
*China, the Body Everywhere?*, Marseille Museum of Contemporary Art, FR
- 2003 *CTRL-Z*, Taikang Top Space, Beijing, CN  
*Distance: The Exhibition of Chinese Contemporary Art*, Guangdong Art Museum, Guangzhou, CN

- 2002 *Run Jump Craw L Walk*, The East Modern Art Center, Beijing, CN  
Chinese Contemporary Arts, St. Paul, BR  
Paris-Beijing, Paris, FR  
*Contesting Meaning in Public Space: Labor Community and Public Art*, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan
- 2001 *Next Generation*, Galerie Loft, Paris, FR  
*In Contradiction*, Finnish Museum of Photography, Helsinki, FL  
*Disorientation: Photography and Video in China Today*, Chambers Fine Art, New York, US  
*Visibility*, China Art Archives & Warehouse, Beijing CN  
*Weightlessness*, Volker Diehl Gallery, Beilin, GER
- 2000 *Documentary Exhibition of Chinese Avant-Garde Art in the 1990s*, Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka, JP  
*Lovely*, Modern Museum, Beijing, CN  
*The 3rd Annual Sculpture Exhibition*, He Xiangning Museum, Shenzhen, CN  
*Fuck Off*, Eastlink Gallery, Shanghai, CN

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