

# China's Avant-Garde, 1978–2018

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## Chapter 10

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### **Stealing the art of pain**

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# 10 Stealing the art of pain

## Body art and Zhao Yue's *Lattice*

*Giorgio Strafella and Daria Berg*

### Introduction

In her study on literary modernism in Republican-era China, Shu-mei Shih notes that modernism never actually ‘traveled one way from a point of origin to a place of destination’.<sup>1</sup> Yet both Western and Chinese critics consistently conceptualised it as doing so, portraying China as the ‘cultural recipient’ of ideas and models that arrived there from the outside.<sup>2</sup> Narratives of late-twentieth-century intellectual life have analogously employed metaphors of ‘arrival’ and ‘influx’ to describe how Chinese authors, thinkers, and artists engaged with ideas and trends considered non-native.<sup>3</sup> Such metaphors risk eliding the agency of the individuals and institutions involved in that complex effort, while overlooking ‘cross-fertilization’ and ‘transcultural interactions’, to use Shih’s words again.<sup>4</sup>

This study instead foregrounds the meanings and characteristics that an artistic language first canonised in the West, namely ‘body art’ (*shenti yishu* 身体艺术, or *routi yishu* 肉体艺术), has assumed in the mainland Chinese intellectual context through its adoption and interpretation. With this aim in view, this chapter will first introduce the emergence of body art in post-1978 China, and then examine the debate surrounding an art performance by woman artist Zhao Yue 赵跃 (b. 1981) entitled *Gezi* 格子 (*Lattice*, or *Grids*, 2007). By examining the reception of body art and the case of Zhao Yue’s performance, in particular, the chapter points to body art as a cultural trend where postsocialist biopolitics and gendered cultural identities intersect with transcultural flows of artistic experimentation.

The development and reception of ‘body art’ in mainland China constitutes a less explored part of a wider intellectual trend – i.e. the study of, and experimentation with, languages and ideas previously banned as subverting the Communist Party’s orthodoxy on art. Underground experimentation which rejected Maoist axioms on art had already begun in the mid-1970s and surfaced in public exhibitions right after the start of the Reform era in 1978/1979.<sup>5</sup> Groups of young artists started experimenting with a range of radically innovative avant-garde languages after the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign of 1983, and especially around 1986.<sup>6</sup> Body art in mainland China lies where this experimentation effort intersects with another post-Cultural Revolution intellectual trend that cuts across art and literature, namely the search for subjectivity and the introspective reflection on ‘the

human subject's own role in producing its meaning'.<sup>7</sup> During the 1990s, a new phenomenon emerged in China's painting and performance art: for the first time, the body 'appeared as a "locus of the self" and an index of subjectivity' and came to be 'represented through an emotional lens'.<sup>8</sup>

This study defines body art based on the use of the human body as the primary material of artistic creation and the performance of actions of cruelty, modification and endangerment on the artist's body.<sup>9</sup> Others have adopted a different definition and labelled photographic works by artists like Fen·Ma Liuming 芬·马六明 (b. 1969) as 'body art' based on their display of the artists' naked bodies.<sup>10</sup> The definition adopted by this study stems from Lea Vergine's<sup>11</sup> and RoseLee Goldberg's<sup>12</sup> analyses of works by Gina Pane, Chris Burden and *Wiener Aktionismus* exponents Günter Brus, Herman Nitsch, Otto Mühl and Rudolf Schwarzkogler, among others. Gao Minglu<sup>13</sup> and Silvia Fok<sup>14</sup> have also drawn on Vergine's analysis to interpret body art from China during the 1990s and 2000s, including works by Zhang Huan 张洵 (b. 1965) and He Yunchang 何云昌 (b. 1967). In the works of these artists as well as other prominent exponents of performance art in China – including, for example, He Chengyao<sup>15</sup> 何成瑶 (b. 1964), Yang Zhichao<sup>16</sup> 杨志超 (b. 1963), Wang Chuyu<sup>17</sup> 王楚禹 (b. 1974), and Qin Ga<sup>18</sup> 琴嘎 (b. 1971) – body art emerged in China as a timely and innovative artistic language with a remarkable potential for sociopolitical criticality, both in relation to the Chinese context specifically and to global modernities in general.

When it irrupted in the capitalist world in the 1960s, body art challenged the definition of artwork, a task initiated by Futurism, Surrealism, Dada and other avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century. As this study defines it, body art belongs to the category of performance art, which itself represents an 'execution' of conceptual art, or the rejection of art as a product.<sup>19</sup> Critics like Vergine interpreted body art as an attack on bourgeois morals and values. They viewed it as part of a wider struggle for individual emancipation from bourgeois hypocrisy and bigotry, connected to the contemporaneous revolts against the massacres perpetrated by Western imperialism. They also described body art as showcasing the revolutionary politicisation of the private – issues that the protest movements of the late 1960s brought to the forefront of public debate.<sup>20</sup> The horrific narratives that body art stages contain the potential to disenfranchise artists and audiences from the traumas and tensions they suffocate in themselves, denying the public 'the illusion of simply sedate madness'.<sup>21</sup>

As we point to Vergine's attempt to define body art, two observations about such 'canonisation' are in order. The first is that even though Vergine's analysis mostly includes works by Euro-American artists, it also features performances by Japanese artists such as Hidetoshi Nagasawa 長澤 英俊 (1940–2018) (who had settled in Milan in the late 1960s), Yoko Ono 小野 洋子 (b. 1933) (e.g., *Cut Piece*, 1964), and Yayoi Kusama 草間 彌生 (b. 1929). Secondly, Lucy Weir has recently identified transcultural connections between Hijikata Tatsumi's 土方 巽 (1928–1986) *butoh* 舞蹈 performances and *Wiener Aktionismus*,<sup>22</sup> while Joan Kee has highlighted examples of body art in South Korea during the late 1960s and early 1970s, including performances by Kang Kukjin (1939–1992), Jung Kangja

(1942–2017), and Jung Chanseung (1942–1994) such as *Murder on the Han River* (1968).<sup>23</sup> These examples complicate the notion that body art represents a ‘Western’ phenomenon – a notion that, as this chapter will show, has played a pivotal role in the reception of body art in China.

### From the Cultural Revolution to body art

In the second half of the 1960s, during roughly the same years as *Wiener Aktionismus*, Mao Zedong unleashed in the Cultural Revolution a movement purportedly against bourgeois-reactionary values that often erupted in publicly staged cruelty on human bodies. Martina Köppel-Yang has compared the ‘total aestheticisation of politics, society, and everyday life’ during the Cultural Revolution to a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or ‘overall artistic performance’, and to the Beuysian concept of Social Sculpture.<sup>24</sup> The work of photo-journalist Li Zhensheng 李振盛 (1940–2020) has captured the quintessential expression of this aestheticisation – the staged torture and humiliation of so-called counter-revolutionaries during choreographed public gatherings.<sup>25</sup>

The impact of the experience of the Cultural Revolution on Chinese intellectual life during the 1980s and 1990s emerges most strikingly through the representation of pain and mental illness in avant-garde art. In her study on the laughing face in paintings by Yue Minjun 岳敏君 (b. 1962), Yang Shaobin 杨少斌 (b. 1963), and Zeng Fanzhi 曾梵志 (b. 1964) Katie Hill highlights the link between the representation of hysteria – often in connection with violence – and the trauma of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>26</sup> Through public humiliation sessions, mass violence, and the destruction of historical artefacts, the Cultural Revolution built trauma into the very political structure, so that trauma itself became officially ‘condoned – indeed promoted – to carry out the furthering of the revolutionary process’.<sup>27</sup>

Experimentation by Chinese artists with performance art began around 1985. According to art critic Li Xianting 栗宪庭 (b. 1949), the first art performance was carried out at Peking University in November 1985 by a student of the Central Academy of Fine Arts named Wu Guanghui 吴光辉, who performed ‘action painting’ with black ink on his own cloth-wrapped body.<sup>28</sup> Documentations of art performances staged decades earlier in Europe inspired early performances in China during the 1980s, often by groups of young artists. These artists observed such documentations in foreign and national publications and began to discuss their techniques and meanings among themselves. The art of Yves Klein (1928–1962) – a major figure in *Nouveau Réalisme* whose artistic career started after a brief but intense engagement with the Japanese art world of the early 1950s<sup>29</sup> – appears to have played an especially important role. San Mu 三木 (b. 1963), Lin Yilin 林一林 (b. 1964) and other artists of the pioneering *Nanfang yishujia shalong* 南方艺术家沙龙 (Southern Artist Salon) have spoken of seeing an image from Klein’s performances – most probably *Anthropométries* (1960) – and being inspired by it, even though at that time they tended to ignore both the identity of the artist and details about the circumstances of such performances.<sup>30</sup>

As the works of art groups such as *Chishe* 池社 (Pond Society) and *Guannian ershiyi* 观念21 (Concept 21) show, the artist's body constituted the main focus of performance art in China from the beginning. Packaging represented a new form of expression that early performance artists experimented with. Yet instead of packaging landmarks and buildings, as in Christo's land art, the Chinese artists packaged their own bodies. For instance, in September 1986 Ding Yi 丁乙 (b. 1962), Qin Yifeng 秦一峰 (b. 1961) and Zhang Guoliang 张国梁 (b. 1963) wrapped themselves in yellow cloth and delivered a performance called *Jietou budiao* 街头布雕 (*Street Cloth Sculptures*) in various settings in Shanghai. While these artists declared that they had been inspired by Christo's work,<sup>31</sup> the performance also bears a certain resemblance to Günter Brus' 'self-packaging' in *Ana* (1964).

Pushing this language to new extremes, Zhang Peili 张培力 (b. 1957) and Geng Jianyi 耿建翌 (1962–2017) realised one of the earliest examples of body art in China. In *Baoza – guowang yu wanghou* 包扎—国王与王后 (*Wrapping Up – King and Queen*, Luoyang, November 1986) they 'packaged' their bodies with newspapers and strings, giving the form a self-harming twist.<sup>32</sup> The artists' collaborators pressed the paper against Zhang's and Geng's bodies to cover every inch, then wrapped them tightly with red ropes. They thus inflicted on their victims a sense of suffocation, blindness, and impaired mobility.<sup>33</sup> The written sheets pasted onto the artists' bodies effaced their identity, enclosing them in an anonymous shell of paper covered with words that transformed them into sculptures with inscriptions but without individual features.<sup>34</sup>

While continuing the radical experimentation of the late 1980s, the avant-garde art that followed the authorities' crackdown on the protest movements of 1989 displayed characteristics of de-ideologisation and cynicism<sup>35</sup> – attitudes that artists shared with many contemporaneous intellectuals.<sup>36</sup> Market reforms and commercialisation trends in every cultural domain encouraged attention-grabbing performances, as well as a diversification and de-academisation of artistic languages.<sup>37</sup>

Towards the end of the decade, much artistic research on the body seemed to focus on the theme of death. Several performances and installations employing human and animal corpses went to such extremes as to cause shock in the audience, thus entailing (lucrative) publicity for the artists. To illustrate this phenomenon, Meiling Cheng employs Bourdieu's 'symbolic capital' to propose the term 'violent capital', which describes 'the capital (artistic reputation and attendance rewards) gained by violent actions framed within the symbolic realm of art'.<sup>38</sup> With the invasion of corpses and disembodied bodily tissues in art installations, the artists' attention seemed to move away from living subjects and the issue of agency towards the representation of a 'post-human' or de-humanised world.

It is possible to argue that the late 1990s and early 2000s witnessed a return to sociopolitical criticism and a concern for the human condition in the works of body artists such as He Chengyao, Qin Ga, Wang Chuyu and Yang Zhichao. Their reflections focus on issues such as the relationship between humans and nature and between humans and history, mental illness, and gender roles.<sup>39</sup>

Works by Yang Zhichao and He Yunchang, for instance, lay bare the power of sociopolitical institutions over the individual's body. He Yunchang has a penchant for physically demanding and dangerous performances that points to a concern for the relation between humans and their natural and built environments – a topic also addressed in performances by contemporaneous artists such as Cang Xin 苍鑫 (b. 1967), Qiu Zhijie 邱志杰 (b. 1969) and Song Dong 宋冬 (b. 1966).<sup>40</sup>

For *Yi mi minzhu* 一米民主 (*One Metre Democracy*, 2010), He Yunchang gathered a group of friends and told them that a surgeon would perform a metre-long incision from his shoulder to his leg, without anaesthesia, if they voted in favour of the operation. A majority did so and the incision was carried out on the artist's body in the presence of the voters. As is common in Chinese works of body art, the artist here designs and receives, but has others carry out the act of self-inflicted cruelty. This provocative aspect of *One Metre Democracy* evokes a performance by Chris Burden, *Shoot* (1971), in which Burden's assistant shot the artist in the arm with a rifle. Goldberg reports that after the performance, 'Burden claimed that all those in the gallery were implicated in his act of self-inflicted violence through their failure to intervene'.<sup>41</sup> He Yunchang's performance satirises the potential inhumanity of majority rule, here identified with 'democracy'. But is the artist critiquing election-based political systems? Or does he – as blogger Mélanie Wang, an eye-witness of the performance, suggested – demonstrate the real price of democracy?<sup>42</sup>

### The body and the state

At the turn of the century, following the increasingly attention-grabbing use of bodies and corpses, and the growing visibility of performance art in China as a result of large-scale exhibitions,<sup>43</sup> body art no longer counted as an underground phenomenon. Now it began to attract the censure of the cultural establishment.<sup>44</sup> In 2002, art historian and former vice-director of the National Museum of China (2010–2016), Chen Lüsheng 陈履生 (b. 1956) criticised performances by Chinese artists for displaying excessive 'methods of self-abuse'.<sup>45</sup> The scholar did not merely condemn the method, but also its perceived non-local character. When it came to performance art, Chen directed his criticism especially at the 'attempt to use vulgar imitations to blend into global trends' and the alleged lack of creativity, blaming it on a 'childish, imitative psychology'.<sup>46</sup>

Chen Lüsheng implicitly acknowledges that 'shock art' and body art express a social critique when he argues that 'overemphasis on art's social introspection and social significance' 'counterproductively demonstrates antisocial behaviour'. He attributes such overemphasis to an excess of solicitude towards the human condition. It is also worth noting that Chen is appalled not as much by nudity, as by the 'blind infatuation with injury' and the 'terrifying, bloody, intolerable, hair-raising acts' that test 'our psychological capabilities'. This includes acts displaying physical resistance and endurance. According to Chen Lüsheng, 'the challenging of physiological limits has lost its artistic significance'. He disparagingly compares

this to entries in the *Guinness World Records*. Chen warns that if such performances are tolerated, self-inflicted cruelty will turn into violence against other human beings. For Chen, body art represents a danger that goes beyond a redefinition of ‘art’ or even a critique of social ills.<sup>47</sup> It constitutes a risk to social order. It is the nightmare of social ‘chaos’ – rather than puritanism or cultural conservatism – that underpins Chen’s attack.

Chen’s 2002 argument reflects the spirit of a 2001 Notice from the Ministry of Culture that ordered the end of ‘performance or display of bloody, cruel or obscene spectacles in the name of “art”’.<sup>48</sup> The Notice singled out for crackdown public performances featuring self-mutilation, the abuse of animals, and the display of human or animal remains, also prohibiting the diffusion of such acts through any medium. The Notice ordered the prevention and punishment of such acts by arguing that ‘such hideous behaviour violates national law, disturbs public order, corrupts social mores, and harms the bodily and spiritual health (*shen xin jiankang* 身心健康) of the popular masses, with abominable consequences on society’.<sup>49</sup>

In order to counter the allegedly corrupting influence of these performances, the Notice also instructed the relevant local authorities to actively promote a ‘correct’ aesthetic sense through the traditional means of propaganda and education. They were therefore expected to ‘reinforce positive propaganda’ and help the public improve their ability to ‘identify and appreciate art’ by intensifying ‘education on Marxist aesthetic thought and on the Party’s policies on literature and art’.<sup>50</sup> In an Annex, the Ministry of Culture reproduced laws relevant to the interpretation of the Notice, starting from Article 53 of the 1982 Constitution: ‘Citizens of the People’s Republic of China must abide by the constitution and the law, keep state secrets, protect public property, observe labour discipline and public order, and respect social ethics.’<sup>51</sup>

A decade later, the ‘legal boundaries’ of performance art were debated in the media following a controversial performance by Beijing-based artist Cheng Li 成力 (b. 1954). In May 2011, Cheng Li carried out a performance which included a sexual act. The performance initially took place inside an exhibition open only to invited guests, but then moved to the roof of the building where passers-by could see it. Cheng was charged with ‘picking a quarrel and causing trouble’<sup>52</sup> and sentenced to a year of reeducation through labour.

In an article originally published in the *Xin jing bao* 新京报 and republished by top official papers including *Guangming ribao* 光明日报 (*Guangming Daily*) and *Renmin ribao* 人民日报 (*People’s Daily*), legal practitioner Yang Tao 杨涛 criticised the ruling as inappropriate and excessive. While acknowledging the need to set legal limits to performance art, he referred to the ‘Law on Public Security Administration and Punishment’<sup>53</sup> to contend that Cheng Li should have been charged with ‘making an obscene performance’, a crime punished with a maximum of fifteen days in jail. Yang Tao concluded by asserting that while ‘the essence of the law is to safeguard people’s freedom’, performance art should ‘neither have a negative impact on others, nor run counter to public order and

morals'.<sup>54</sup> The article and its reproduction are noteworthy not only because Tao argues in favour of a more lenient sentence, but also because the article acknowledges Cheng Li's performance as art. While the case of Cheng Li's performance possibly signalled a shift in the authorities' approach to performance art, public as well as official disapproval for this type of art still lingered.<sup>55</sup>

Later that year, the debate on the legality of Cheng Li's performance continued in the legal magazine *Jiancha Fengyun* (检察风云 *Prosecutorial View*), which published a series of articles on this case by lawyers. One of them, Sun Ruizhuo 孙瑞灼, called for harsher sentencing of performances undermining morality, stating that art, like life, needs to unfold in harmony with social order.<sup>56</sup> Another legal scholar named He Jingjun 和静钧, on the contrary, suggested that creative artistic expression, when recognised as such by the art world, should be subject to individual appraisal and not repressed by means of public order legislation.<sup>57</sup> On this matter, the magazine's moderating editor declared that 'performance art is after all a kind of art and, as such, it should have a didactic function as well as respect the limits of law, of morality, and of the traditional ethical code'.<sup>58</sup>

The 2001 Notice betrays a paternalistic government that views extreme performance art as poison for people's minds and, hence, a threat to social harmony. While the authorities here claim to be concerned with protecting the health of the masses' hearts, minds and bodies, the health of society comes first. The Notice aims at protecting the body's health primarily by means of preserving social order. Ensuring that the people embrace the correct definition of art becomes part of this effort.

The idea that it behoves the government to protect the bodies and minds of the masses can be seen as a lingering element of Chinese socialism in the postsocialist era.<sup>59</sup> In her study on sport and physical education in socialist China, Susan Brownell observes that 'the link between the bodies of the people and leaders with the welfare of the nation and the state were logical outgrowths of the egalitarian, militaristic, and proletarian Maoist body culture'.<sup>60</sup> In the Maoist order, the body was to serve socialism through labour and military service, hence the goals of physical culture – strongly advanced by the regime – were to protect public health, thus increasing productivity and preparing the masses to defend the country from foreign armies. Crucially, this effort was not directed towards the body of the individual, but rather that of the masses. Xu Jian similarly contends that 'the body nurtured by socialism' was 'very much a public, mass body' while the individual, private bodies had effectively 'disappeared'.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, one may argue that, by dint of disappearing in the Party-organised socialist mass and merging into the struggle-oriented 'mass body', the individual body and its health assume even greater significance. As Mark Elvin puts it, the revolutionary's body is 'a component in a collective structure or a collective machine',<sup>62</sup> and the functioning of the entire machine depends on its resilience and strength. If the toughening of the body to serve the cause is not sufficient, then the individual is expected to sacrifice their body for the struggle.<sup>63</sup>



### Zhao Yue's *Lattice*

Zhao Yue graduated from the Department of Art and Design at the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in 2004. While she has also created paintings and installations, Zhao Yue has continued to practise performance art in recent years with such works as *Dubai* 独白 (*Monologue*, 2013), *Shengbei yu jian* 圣杯与剑 (*The Holy Grail and the Sword*, 2014) and *Shengming zhi men* 生命之门 (*Gate of Life*, 2015).<sup>64</sup> Her best-known performance, *Lattice*, took place on 5 June 2007 during the 'June Alliance' (*Liuyue lianhe* 六月联合) Performance Art Summit in Beijing.<sup>65</sup> Rather than proposing a novel interpretation of Zhao's work, this section examines *Lattice* through the lens of intellectual history, bringing to the fore the interpretations of contemporaneous Chinese commentators. This approach will reveal issues of identity, power and morality that underpin the reception of this performance, and those of body art in China in general.

*Lattice* takes place before an audience of a few dozen spectators on a small stage where a low table and a round table mirror are arranged. The sky is already dark. The artist walks onto the stage wearing loose black clothing, her head shaved. She sits calmly in front of the table. While looking at herself in the mirror, she slowly cuts her face with vertical and horizontal cuts, carving the bleeding shape of a grid onto her forehead and cheeks. After about ten long cuts, as blood flows on her eyes and down to her chin, she stands up and leaves the stage. Contrary to most body art from China, the violence in *Lattice* is executed by the artist herself, her eyes wide-open during most of the action.

Zhao Yue's performance echoes a literary performance during a book reading by German author and doctor Rainald Goetz (b. 1954) at the Klagenfurt literary festival in 1983.<sup>66</sup> While sitting at a table on stage in front of an audience at the book festival and reading aloud from his latest novel, *Irre* (*Insane*, 1983), Goetz produced a razor blade and started to cut his forehead until blood dripped all over his face and the literary manuscript, his work of art. Precedents such as the performances of Gina Pane and Rainald Goetz show how Zhao Yue's work resonates with both transcultural and transmedia trends, transcending both different artistic media and different cultural spheres.

In an essay posted a few days after Zhao Yue's performance, an anonymous blogger writing under the name of Lao He 老贺 described it as follows:

The sharp blade, the white cheeks, the slow movements, the slender fingers, the fine rivulets of blood – altogether they make up for a shocking scene. This is not a film shot, or a theatrical performance, or a horror movie – it is woman performance artist Zhao Yue's artwork *Lattice*, it is a woman using the sublime method of cutting and spoiling her looks – but to communicate what?<sup>67</sup>

The vaguely lyrical description highlights the contrast between the violence of the act, the elegance of the artist's movements, and the 'apathetic' expression on her face.<sup>68</sup> Such a visual conflict is accentuated through the contrast between blade and blood on the one hand, and attractiveness and elegance on the other. The

blogger here attributes traditional characteristics of beauty to the artist's body, such as slender fingers and a fair complexion. Moreover, the performer is repeatedly identified as a woman.

Zhao Yue's shaved head already subverts ancient Chinese ideals of beauty, which are comprised of skin and teeth as white as snow and clear jade; lips as red as cinnabar; and jet-black hair, irises and eyebrows.<sup>69</sup> The cutting of her face violently shatters such archetypes, the crimson of blood supplanting the scarlet of lips. Zhao Yue's work resonates not only with traditional ideas about women's beauty, but also with moral ideals such as filial piety. On the one hand, there is the tradition of celebrating *lienü* 烈女 or exemplary women – as a critical commentator also observed.<sup>70</sup> On the other, the traditional practice of self-mutilation for moral purposes such as *gegu* 割股, consisting of cutting flesh from one's thigh or arm and serving it in a soup to cure an ailing parent, applies to heroic children of both sexes. The earliest reference to *gegu* appears in the *Zhuangzi*, where a man named Jie Zitui 介子推 cuts his own flesh to feed the ruler, Duke Wen 文.<sup>71</sup> Starting in the late Tang era, imperial authorities praised the practice and rewarded those who displayed such extreme filial devotion. However, authoritative Confucian thinkers like Han Yu 韩愈 (768–824) condemned *gegu* as an unfilial perversion that runs counter to the teachings of the ancients.<sup>72</sup> By subverting the three traditional ideals – those of first, female beauty; second, filial piety; and third, exemplary women – Zhao Yue's act reacts to China's cultural heritage, as well as the Western transcultural trends discussed above.

Zhao Yue's gender identity – which the artist may have tried to reframe by shaving her head and wearing baggy clothes – becomes the starting point from which blogger Lao He proposes a personal interpretation of the artwork:

My first thought was: 'this woman has gone mad' ... But then I asked myself, what kind of psychological condition can lead a woman to carry out such an extreme performance? There is no need to remark how important looks are for a woman. 'A woman preens herself for her admirer' – a woman consciously spoiling her looks is certainly the most brutal subversion of the fundamental aesthetic principles of a male-dominated world. It is also the most fundamental rejection and negation of a woman's role in the eyes of a man.<sup>73</sup>

The adage 'a woman preens herself for her admirer' – which Lao He here cites to epitomise the role of women in a male-dominated society – originates in the *Zhan guo ce* 战国策 (*Intrigues of the Warring States*, ca. 300–221 BCE), where the complete sentence includes a precept on the moral duties of both gentlemen and gentlewomen: 'The true warrior requites the lord who knew his worth by dying for him, just as a woman makes herself beautiful for the man who delights in her.'<sup>74</sup> The passage refers to a woman's willingness to pretty herself up for a man's gaze as a natural and expected act, employing it rhetorically to emphasise the more important obligation between gentlemen. Although Lao He seems moved by the feminist meaning they read in *Lattice*, the blogger's reference to the

old adage suggests an acceptance of the notion that looks are obviously important for a woman and the artwork should be read through this notion of the ‘feminine’.

Blogger Lao He’s interpretation of *Lattice* as a feminist artwork was echoed in an article published a few weeks later by Jia Fangzhou 贾方舟 (b. 1940), a Beijing-based art critic and curator.<sup>75</sup> Speaking against detractors of Zhao Yue’s work who accused her of insanity and a lack of originality, Jia’s article argues that *Lattice* is the fruit of in-depth reflection, judging positively both the extreme character of the action and the adoption of the method of ‘cuts’ from Western artists such as Gina Pane.

The critic focuses his reading of *Lattice* on the concept of ‘face’ in Chinese culture and the identity of Zhao Yue as a young woman. In the first part of his commentary, Jia writes that,

in a broad sense ‘face’ is not merely a physical idea, but psychological, ethical and moral as well. It is the symbol of one’s individuality and dignity and represents the place where lies all the value of a human being.<sup>76</sup>

As such, the face ‘is the emblem of one’s honour and dignity’. Jia also cites a popular saying which stresses how essential it is to protect one’s reputation, for which ‘face’ is a metaphor: ‘One cannot live without face, a tree cannot live without bark, a wall cannot live without a layer of plaster.’ In Chinese culture, Jia continues, if one wishes to live with dignity and honour, one must protect one’s ‘face’ at any cost. This leads Jia to interpret Zhao’s ‘skin canvas’ as a metaphor for the all-important ‘face’.<sup>77</sup>

The second part of Jia’s commentary introduces the element of Zhao Yue’s gender into the interpretation.<sup>78</sup> Now the genderless human being of the first part – whose face symbolises honour and dignity – turns out to be a man:

Concretely speaking, what Zhao actually works on is the face of a young woman. If the face of a man mainly symbolises his morals, then for a woman the face symbolises aesthetic appreciation. ‘A woman preens herself for her admirer.’ A woman cares more about the face as something with a physiological and aesthetic significance. According to one statistical survey, in a year a woman applies a total of three kilograms of make-up to her face. I doubt the veracity of such an exaggerated figure, but it does show how important is the aesthetic value attached to the face of a woman.<sup>79</sup>

This echoes again the *Intrigues of the Warring States* adage, namely that men are ethical beings preoccupied with ideals and integrity, while women are obsessed with their appearance to the male gaze. Having now gendered the artist, Jia attributes a meaning to Zhao Yue’s artwork that stems from her violation of her own face – the sacrifice of a valued object that bestows sacrality on the object and on the act itself. In his essay, Jia cites a friend of Zhao’s as stating that the artist used to be pretty, but in the last few years she had stopped wearing make-up and shaved her hair, concluding that by doing so ‘to a certain degree, she had already

stified her gender identity as a form of protest'.<sup>80</sup> Jia concludes that Zhao Yue's performance represents an expression of 'extreme feminism' and a challenge to a male-dominated society.<sup>81</sup>

Finally, Jia Fangzhou addresses the similarity between *Lattice* and an iconic example of body art by Gina Pane, *Il latte caldo* (1972), in which the artist cut her face and forearms with a razor blade. Jia recalls that when a friend of Zhao's told him about what the artist planned to perform, he 'strongly opposed her plans, deeming that such a replication would have lacked all meaning'.<sup>82</sup> When Zhao Yue decided to go ahead with the performance despite Jia's objections, the critic realised 'she had no intention to repeat history and neither did she have any intention to make history'. Determined to realise her artwork, she feared neither criticism nor misinterpretations, and 'she was not looking for compassion either'. Jia concluded that the artist 'was moved by an inner urge ... Without a powerful spiritual urge there she could have never completed this work'.<sup>83</sup>

A few months later, Tong Yujie 佟玉洁, a renowned art critic and academic based at the Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, challenged the feminist interpretation of *Lattice* and the very artistic value of the performance.<sup>84</sup> In her article, Tong compared Zhao Yue to the *lienü* of ancient China who received praise from the traditional patriarchal society for mutilating themselves in the name of filial piety and chastity. In Tong's opinion, just as fathers and husbands regarded such women as paragons of virtue, Zhao Yue's denying her pretty complexion to men's gaze is praised by 'neopatriarchal' male art critics as a feminist artwork. This pseudo-feminism, Tong argues, is both illegitimate and immoral, and will lead to 'violent and bloody rubbish that runs counter to civilisation'.<sup>85</sup>

Tong denies the artistic value of the performance and suggests that meaningful social criticism in art can only come from 'rational expression', not from 'violence and bloodiness'. She also condemns as 'immoral' those who share and spread images of Zhao's performance through the internet. Against such artistic practices, she evokes the authority of Zhuangzi – 'our cultural ancestor, sage and philosopher' – quoting the line: 'The Way gave him a face; Heaven gave him a form'.<sup>86</sup> 'Critical art discourse that approves of violent and bloody forms aims at emphasising its own discursive power', Tong argues; 'it is easy to see that the art criticism which lavishes praise on violence and bloodiness has a questionable moral quality'.<sup>87</sup>

While denying that body art – and 'feminist' body art in particular – can play a role in contemporary Chinese art, Tong acknowledges the value of body art performances by Western artists such as *Il latte caldo*.<sup>88</sup> Alongside Pane's performance, Tong praises feminist art that 'emerged in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s', a category in which she includes Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* and Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* (1974). 'Only a few rare artists excessively employed violence and blood', Tong declares, 'and thus became objects of criticism'.<sup>89</sup>

In her critique of *Lattice*, Tong states that compared to those feminist artists from the West, Zhao Yue and other Chinese artists like Sun Furong 孙芙蓉 (b. 1961) are 'usurpers' – arguably, of the 'feminist' title as well as of body art.

When they adopt gestures that belong to the ‘Western artistic past’, Tong claims, their works only result in meaningless overkill of the original act.<sup>90</sup> Adding to her criticism of Chinese artworks that adopt such artistic languages from abroad, Tong writes that ‘in the absence of the slightest protection of intellectual property rights’ such works display a deficit of creativity and ‘the robber mentality of someone anxious for fame’. Finally, Tong dismisses Zhao’s ‘act of disfiguration’ as non-art and not feminist because it ‘lacks the wisdom displayed by Western feminist art in deconstructing the male discourse’.<sup>91</sup>

The debate highlights how critics codified the body in Zhao Yue’s artwork as both female and Chinese. The latter dimension leads Tong Yujie to question the reason why a *Chinese* artist would adopt an artistic language already canonised in the West (and Japan) several decades earlier. On this point, her answer seems close to Chen Lüsheng’s position on the issue, i.e. one firmly opposed to ‘imitative psychology’ and ‘vulgar imitations’.<sup>92</sup> Tong’s and Jia’s commentaries show how the ritualised yet simple action in *Lattice* compelled art critics to draw a parallel between Zhao’s performance and Pane’s, thus making the question of originality and appropriation almost inevitable. A crucial question, however, remains unasked: Why would an artist in China choose to adopt a decades-old language, being fully aware that doing so would not only cause her physical pain but also attract accusations of plagiarism and unoriginality? The reception of the artwork itself might point to an answer. The lingering of traditional gender roles even among sympathetic critics, alongside the doubt as to whether a Chinese woman artist could express a critique of those roles as powerfully as her foreign predecessors, suggests that Zhao Yue’s choice may have been neither out of context nor unnecessary.<sup>93</sup>

### **Concluding remarks**

The case of *Lattice* illustrates many of the issues raised by the reception of body art in China. As body art has emerged in the context of China’s postsocialist culture, it has taken on new layers of meaning that stem from contemporary local debates regarding national identity and the marketisation of the cultural sphere. The provocative and sometimes bewildering nature of body art performance leads critics and viewers alike to ask some of the key questions animating intellectual life in postsocialist China: How does cultural/national identity shape the way art and literature are created and interpreted? How does cultural tradition relate to gender roles for Chinese women and to the way they subvert them? How are ideas, methods and styles codified as ‘foreign’ or ‘Western’, and how does such codification relate to the reception and interpretation of creative works? Hence the decade-long accusations against body art that it is a shortcut to cultural stardom, a poisonous import, or a foreign language that runs counter to Chinese tradition, firmly place this artistic trend within the cultural and ideological life of contemporary China.<sup>94</sup> Against the backdrop of the history examined in this chapter, the reception of *Lattice* shows how such fierce debates reveal, contest, and continuously negotiate the transcultural dimensions of China’s avant-garde.

## Notes

- 1 Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917–1937*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001, 11.
- 2 Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, 11.
- 3 For example, Xudong Zhang, ‘Epilogue: Postmodernism and Postsocialist Society – Historicizing the Present’, in Arif Dirlik and Xudong Zhang, eds., *Postmodernism & China*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000, 429 and 442.
- 4 Shih, *Lure of the Modern*, 10 and 221. On the complexity of this process see, for instance, Lü Peng’s remarks on post-1978 avant-garde sculpture in China in Lü Peng, *Fragmented Reality: Contemporary Art in 21st-Century China*, Milan: Charta, 2012, 275–81.
- 5 Changes within the Party-state cultural establishment were crucial to this development, including the Fourth Congress of Writers and Artists in 1979 and the debate on Marxism and humanism in the early 1980s. See Howard Goldblatt, *Chinese Literature for the 1980s: The Fourth Congress of Writers and Artists*, Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 1982; Beijing Daxue Zhexuexi 北京大学哲学系, eds., *Guanyu rendao zhuyi he yihua wenti lunwenji* 关于人道主义和异化问题论文集, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1984.
- 6 See Li Xianting, ‘Major Trends in the Development of Contemporary Chinese Art’, in Valerie C. Doran et al., eds., *China’s New Art Post-1989*, Hong Kong: Hanart TZ Gallery, 1993, x–xxii, and Lu Hong 鲁虹, *Zhongguo dangdai yishu shi 1978–1999* 中国当代艺术史1978–1999, Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2013, 180–205. On art groups that experimented with performance art, see Silvia Fok 霍少霞, *Zhongguo xingwei yishu: shenti yu changyu* 中国行为艺术: 身体与场域, Taipei: Yishujia chubanshe, 2010.
- 7 Rong Cai, *The Subject in Crisis in Contemporary Chinese Literature*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004, 28.
- 8 Katie Hill, ‘Why the Manic Grin? Hysterical Bodies: Contemporary Art as (Male) Trauma in Post-Cultural Revolution China’, in Jiang Jiehong, *Burden or Legacy*, 79 and 72.
- 9 Gao Minglu adopts a similar definition in ‘Demonised Man: Ritualising the Body in Chinese Performance Art’, in Gao Minglu, *The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art*, Buffalo, NY: Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 2007, 161–86.
- 10 For example, Sheldon H Lu, *Chinese Modernity and Global Biopolitics. Studies in Literature and Visual Culture*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007, 71–92.
- 11 Lea Vergine, *Body Art and Performance: The Body as Language*, Milan: Skira Editore, 2000, 7–27.
- 12 RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2009.
- 13 Gao Minglu, *Total Modernity and the Avant-Garde in Twentieth-Century Chinese Art*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011, 278.
- 14 Silvia Fok, *Life and Death: Art and the Body in Contemporary China*, Chicago, IL: Intellect Books, 2013, 5.
- 15 For example, *Guangbo ticao* 广播体操 (*Public Broadcast Exercises*, 2004).
- 16 For example *Zhong cao* 种草 (*Planting Grass*, 2000) and *Cang* 藏 (*Hide*, 2002).
- 17 For example, *Xianfa yuedu* 宪法阅读 (*Reading the Constitution*, 2002). See Meiling Cheng, ‘Dappled China: “Untamed Histories” Surrounding the China Brand’, *Yishu* 11.4, 2012, 48–9.
- 18 For example, *Weixing changzheng* 微型长征 (*Miniature Long March*, 2002–2005).
- 19 Goldberg, *Performance Art*, 7.
- 20 Vergine, *Body Art*; Goldberg, *Performance Art*.
- 21 Vergine, *Body Art*, 20.
- 22 Lucy Weir, ‘Abject Modernism: The Male Body in the Work of Tatsumi Hijikata, Günter Brus and Rudolf Schwarzkogler’, *Tate Papers* 23, 2015, available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/23/abject-modernism-the-male-body-in-the>

- work-of-tatsumi-hijikata-gunter-brus-and-rudolf-schwarzkogler, accessed 20 June 2020.
- 23 Joan Kee, 'Why Performance Art in Authoritarian Korea?', *Tate Papers* 23, 2015, available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/23/why-performance-in-authoritarian-korea>, accessed 20 June 2020.
- 24 Martina Köppel-Yang, 'Zaofan Youli/Revolt is Reasonable: Remanifestations of the Cultural Revolution in Chinese Contemporary Art of the 1980s and 1990s', *Yishu* 1–2, 2002, 66.
- 25 Li Zhensheng, *Red-Color News Soldier: A Chinese Photographer's Odyssey through the Cultural Revolution*, London: Phaidon, 2003. On Li Zhensheng's work, in particular the 'positive' and 'negative' representations of women's body in his photographs, see Linda Jean Pittwood, 'Visualizing Biopower, Discipline and the Female Body in Mid-Twentieth Century China', *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* 4.2–3, 2017, 203–20. On the link between the experience of the Cultural Revolution and avant-garde experiments in the 1980s see also Andrea Riemenschmitter's chapter in this volume. To be sure, rallies and parades characterised by careful staging and ritualisation already constituted 'a daily staple of collective activities' by the time the Cultural Revolution started (Yang Su, *Collective Killings in Rural China during the Cultural Revolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 142). Those political campaigns represented 'a form of public ritual', Yang Su wrote; 'from verbal attack to physical abuse', a 'wide variety of tactical choices in the existing repertoire of ritual' served to demonstrate the power hierarchy (*ibid.*, 141).
- 26 Hill, 'Why the Manic Grin?'
- 27 Hill, 'Why the Manic Grin?', 73. For a literary example of the disruptive permanence of Cultural Revolution violence in China's subconscious, see Yu Hua's short novel *1986 (Nineteen Eighty-Six)*, 1987, where the character of the vagrant – a teacher turned madman due to traumatic events during the Cultural Revolution – performs public acts of self-mutilation after shouting the name of ancient methods of torture, almost resembling a body artist.
- 28 Li Xianting 栗宪庭, 'Xu 2: Xingwei yishu hen "jin renqing"' 序2: 行为艺术很“近人情”, in Cai Qing 蔡青, *Xingwei yishu yu xinling zhiyu* 行为艺术与心灵治愈, Beijing: Shijie tushu, 2012, 10.
- 29 See Yves Klein et al., *Yves Klein Japan*, Paris: Éditions Dilecta, 2017.
- 30 Fok, *Zhongguo xingwei*, 20 and personal correspondence of the authors with Silvia Fok.
- 31 Fok, *Life and Death*, 7–8.
- 32 Berghuis, *Performance Art in China*, 50.
- 33 See also the performance *Da boli – mengxiang tiantang* 大玻璃—梦想天堂 (*Big Glass – Paradise in a Dream*, 1993) by the SHS Group.
- 34 Berghuis, *Performance Art in China*, 50–1.
- 35 Hou Hanru, 'Towards an "Un-Unofficial Art": De-ideologicalisation of China's Contemporary Art in the 1990s', *Third Text* 34, 1996, 37–52; Norman Bryson, 'The Post-Ideological Avant-Garde', in Gao Minglu, ed., *Inside Out: New Chinese Art*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998, 51–8.
- 36 See Giorgio Strafella, *Intellectual Discourse in Reform Era China: The Debate on the Spirit of the Humanities in the 1990s*, London: Routledge, 2017.
- 37 Dao Zi 岛子, 'Xingwei de shenmei jiefang ji qi guiyi' 行为的审美解放及其诡异, *Tianya* 天涯 6, 1996, 99–102; Thomas J. Berghuis, 'Considering Huanjing: Positioning Experimental Art in China', *Positions: Asia Critique* 12.3, 2004, 711–31.
- 38 Meiling Cheng, *Beijing Xingwei: Contemporary Chinese Time-Based Art*, London and Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2013, 145.
- 39 See, e.g., Daniel Brine and Shu Yang, eds., *China Live. Reflections on Contemporary Performance Art*, Manchester: Chinese Arts Centre, 2005.

- 40 See, e.g., Cang Xin's *Jiaoliu* 交流 (*Communication*, 1999–2000) and *Ticao* 体操 (*Gymnastics*, 2007–2008), or Song Dong's *Haqi* 哈气 (*Exhale*, 1996) – a statement on the evanescence of body and memory that takes on a powerful meaning in his Tiananmen Square performance.
- 41 In RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art since the 60s*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2004, 107.
- 42 Mélanie Wang, “‘Yuhumoupi’ He Yunchangyiminzhuzhu” “与虎谋皮”何云昌一米民主, 11 October 2010, available at: <http://melanieinbeijing.blog.sohu.com/160870631.html>, accessed 5 September 2011.
- 43 Wu Hung, *Exhibiting Experimental Art in China*, Chicago, IL: David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, 2000.
- 44 Rachel Morarjee, ‘China’s Cultural Czars Take a Hard Line on Avant-Garde Art’, *AFP*, 10 May 2001 (retrieved through Nexis UK); Berghuis, ‘Considering *Huanjing*’.
- 45 Chen Lüsheng, ‘Reflections on Performance Art’, trans. Lee Ambrozy, in Wu Hung, ed., *Contemporary Chinese Art: Primary Documents*, New York: MoMA, 2010, 274–6.
- 46 Chen, ‘Reflections’, 275.
- 47 Chen, ‘Reflections’, 275–6.
- 48 Wenhuaabu 文化部, ‘Guanyu jianjue zhizhi yi “yishu” de mingyi biaoyan huo zhan-shi xuexing canbao yinhui changmian de tongzhi’ 关于坚决制止以“艺术”的名义表演或展示血腥残暴淫秽场面的通知, 3 April 2001, available at <http://law.lawtime.cn/d438513443607.html>, accessed 22 September 2011.
- 49 Wenhuaabu, ‘Guanyu jianjue’.
- 50 Wenhuaabu, ‘Guanyu jianjue’.
- 51 Adapted from the English translation available at: <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/constitution/constitution.html>, accessed 12 October 2011.
- 52 See Article 19 Clause 4 of the Law on Public Security Administration and Punishment (*Zhi'an guanli chufa fa* 治安管理处罚法). The 2005 version of the law is available from [http://www.gov.cn/flfg/2005-08/29/content\\_27130.htm](http://www.gov.cn/flfg/2005-08/29/content_27130.htm), accessed 10 September 2011. Clauses from a previous version of the law are included in an annex to Wenhuaabu, ‘Guanyu jianjue’.
- 53 See above.
- 54 Yang Tao 杨涛, ‘Xingwei yishu bu shi mei you falü de bianjie’ 行为艺术不是没有法律的边界, *Xin jing bao* 新京报, 10 May 2011, available at: <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2011/05-10/3028090.shtml>, accessed 14 September 2019.
- 55 See, e.g., artist and curator Zhang Haitao 张海涛 (b. 1976) on a major retrospective exhibition on performance art in China: Zhang Haitao 张海涛, ‘Bei wudu (jie) de “xingwei” – ershi nian duo nian xingwei yishu xianxiang he beijing’ 被误读（解）的“行为”——二十年多年行为艺术现象和背景, *ArtLinkArt*, 7 October 2010, available at: <http://www.artlinkart.com/cn/article/overview/f59cuuoj/genres/critique/B>, accessed 10 May 2020.
- 56 Sun Ruizhuo 孙瑞灼, ‘Xingwei yishu bu neng weibe “gongxu liangsu” 行为艺术不能违背“公秩良俗”’, *Jiancha fengyun* 检察风云 11, 2011, 48–9.
- 57 He Jingjun 和静钧, ‘Ke fou gei chuge de xingwei yishu yidian kuanrong’ 可否给出格的行为艺术一点宽容, *Jiancha fengyun* 检察风云 11, 2011, 49.
- 58 Jin Weihua 靳伟华, ‘Xingwei yishu xu bu xuyao dixian’ 行为艺术需不需要底线, *Jiancha fengyun* 检察风云 11, 2011, 48.
- 59 The term ‘postsocialist’ denotes here a state in which ‘socialist institutions such as state planning, collective work units, guaranteed job allocation, housing distribution, free healthcare, and fixed pricing have all disappeared but residual socialist mentalities, sensibilities, and hierarchies continue to impact on people’s behavior’ (Hockx, *Internet Literature in China*, 2).



- 60 Susan Brownell, *Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People's Republic*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995, 58.
- 61 Jian Xu, 'Body, Discourse, and the Cultural Politics of Contemporary Chinese Qigong', *Journal of Asian Studies* 58.4, 1999, 974.
- 62 Mark Elvin, 'Tales of *Shen* and *Xin*: Body-Person and Heart-Mind in China during the Last 150 Years', in Michel Feher, ed., *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, Part Two, New York: Zone, 1989, 341.
- 63 Brownell, *Training the Body*, 340–1.
- 64 Photographs of these performances can be seen on Zhao Yue's micro-blogging account on Weibo, <https://hk.weibo.com/user/2746197375>, accessed 2 July 2020. Her micro-blogging (2013–2020) reflects intense support for feminism and gender equality, with a particular concern for violence against women and for LGBT rights.
- 65 *Liuyue Lianhe* 六月联合, 1–6 June 2007. Photographic documentation of the performance is available at this webpage: Arai Shin-ichi, 'June-Alliance (六月联合). The Communication Campaign of China Live ART in Beijing, China, 1st–6th June 2007', Arai's blog, <http://www.araiart.jp/4june07.html>, accessed 20 June 2020; and ArtLinkArt, 'Series: Lattice', undated, available at [http://www.artlinkart.com/en/artist/wrk\\_sr/fl1fAtu](http://www.artlinkart.com/en/artist/wrk_sr/fl1fAtu), accessed 20 June 2020. A video of the performance was available at <http://video.sina.com.cn/v/b/10476703-1494861700.html> (accessed 20 August 2011), but has since been deleted.
- 66 See, e.g., Stefan Dege, 'Rainald Goetz: "Insane"', *Deutsche Welle*, 8 October 2018, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/rainald-goetz-insane/a-44556779#:~:text=While%20reading%20aloud%20from%20the,the%20media%20and%20literary%20world>, accessed 12 February 2021.
- 67 Lao He 老贺, 'Dao bu jian xue yu bu xiu – kan Zhao Yue xingwei yishu "Gezi" hou de guanxing lianxiang' 刀不见血语不休 — 看赵跃行为艺术《格子》后的惯性联想, Lao He's Sina blog, 13 June 2007, [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_4af4b8b3010009ez.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4af4b8b3010009ez.html), accessed 10 September 2011.
- 68 Lao He, 'Dao bu jian xue'.
- 69 See, e.g., James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893, vol. 4, part 1, 94–5; Paul Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies: Gender and the Male Community in Early Chinese Texts*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001, 53; and Xiao Tong, *Wen Xuan or Selections of Refined Literature*, trans. David R. Knechtges, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996, vol. 3, 351.
- 70 Tong Yujie 佟玉洁, "'Gezi": wei xin fuqan wenhua maidan' 《格子》:为新父权文化埋单, *Artron* 27 November 2007, available at: <http://comment.artron.net/20071127/n38019.html#DS>, accessed 20 September 2011.
- 71 Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013, 257.
- 72 On *gegu*, see Berg, *Carnival in China*, 157–9; Yu Gengzhe 于赓哲, 'Gegu fengqin yuanqi de shehui beijing kaocha' 割股奉亲缘起的社会背景考察, *Shixue yuekan* 史学月刊 2, 2006, 94.
- 73 Lao He, 'Dao bu jian'.
- 74 '士为知己者死, 女为悦己者容', in 'Zhao ce yi' 赵策一 (Book of Zhao, I), translation by James I Crump, Jr. in *Chan-Kuo Ts'e*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, 285. On the perception and expectations of gentility, see Daria Berg and Chloë Starr, eds., *The Quest for Gentility in China: Negotiations beyond Gender and Class*, London: Routledge, 2007.
- 75 Jia Fangzhou 贾方舟, 'Linglei de jianjiao: cong Xiao Lu "Kai qiang" dao Zhao Yue "Kai dao"' 另类的尖叫: 从肖鲁“开枪”到赵跃“开刀”, *ArtsBJ* 北京文艺网, 15 July 2007, available at: <http://www.artsbj.com/Html/observe/zhp/wypl/meishu/89439346011143.html>, accessed 30 September 2011.
- 76 Jia, 'Linglei'.
- 77 Jia, 'Linglei'.
- 78 On post-Mao women artists and gendered expectations regarding their art, see Julia F Andrews, 'Women Artists in Twentieth-Century China: A Prehistory of the

- Contemporary', *Positions: Asia Critique*, 28.1, 2020, 53–58; on this and Jia Fangzhou in particular, see Tao Yongbai and Elise David, 'Off the Margins: Twenty Years of Chinese Women's Art (1990–2010)', *Positions: Asia Critique*, 28.1, 2020, 84–86.
- 79 Jia, 'Linglei'.  
80 Jia, 'Linglei'.  
81 Jia, 'Linglei'.  
82 Jia, 'Linglei'.  
83 Jia, 'Linglei'.  
84 Tong, 'Wei fuquan'.  
85 Tong, 'Wei fuquan'.  
86 From 'De chong fu' 德充符 (The Sign of Virtue Complete). Translation from Watson, *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, 41.  
87 Tong, 'Wei fuquan'.  
88 Tong, 'Wei fuquan'.  
89 Tong, 'Wei fuquan'. Apropos Western feminist critiques of body art, see Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, 22–23 and 152.  
90 Tong, 'Wei fuquan'. Tong may be referring here to Sun Furong's *Canshi* 蚕食 (*Encroachment*, 2005–2006), an installation consisting of numerous items of clothing that have been torn, worn, stabbed and cut.  
91 Tong, 'Wei fuquan'.  
92 Chen, 'Reflections'; see above.  
93 On the debate ignited by *Lattice*, particularly with regard to its contested feminist qualities, see also Shuqin Cui, *Gendered Bodies: Toward a Women's Visual Art in Contemporary China*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016, 117–9.  
94 Altehenger, Abu-Er-Rub, and Gehrig have argued that a transcultural trend may have the capacity to be 'reconfigured', 'embedded discursively and made to fit a new culture' while 'retaining an aura of "foreignness"' ('The Transcultural Travels of Trends', 143).