

Qiuzhuang project – a dispersed museum project

Project by artist Li Mu, the Van Abbemuseum and Arthub Asia

Ongoing since February 2013

Over the last months, the Chinese artist Li Mu (Qiuzhuang, 1974) has been developing an art project in his home village Qiuzhuang in China together with the collection of the Van Abbemuseum. Qiuzhuang is a small village of about 1.000 people, approximately 800 kilometers south of Beijing.

Li Mu and the Van Abbemuseum first came into contact during the Shanghai World Expo when Li Mu was part of the Eindhoven-Shanghai exchange project *Double Infinity* organized together with Arthub Asia, a curatorial platform that works in Asia and in the world facilitating and producing challenging projects. Since then, the artist has been involved with the museum and visited Eindhoven in 2011. After that visit, Mu proposed bringing works of the museum's collection to the people of Qiuzhuang. The idea slowly developed and when the difficulties of transport and insurance were clear, the museum and the artist agreed to investigate making copies of certain collection works and displaying the copies around the village. The first concrete steps were taken with the opening of a library in February 2013. Soon afterwards, copies of Sol LeWitt's *Untitled (Wall Structure)* (1972) which were hung up in the village. Mu is also busy creating copies of works by Dan Flavin, Richard Long, Andy Warhol, Daniel Buren, Carl Andre and John Körmeling and videos by Ulay and Abramovic will be displayed over the next months. Now the project is ready to be shared with a broader public.

Li Mu reacts: "I always have faith in the power of culture. I hope that through art, the villagers can understand the outside world, other people, different lifestyles and values."

Charles Esche, director of the Van Abbemuseum: "After meeting Li Mu, I was struck by his passion for the possibilities of art to transform expectations. As a museum, we can offer our knowledge and access to works while he brings a knowledge of his home environment and a sensitive feeling for how these western works may be received. For us it is part of a wider development in which a typical modern art collection tries to come to terms with the social and cultural changes taking place around us. I believe we are extending the potential of the collection through this action and learning how to address contemporary developments."

Davide Quadrio says "Despite the interest of the international art world is still mainly directed toward Beijing or the bigger cities in China, Arthub Asia's desire of empowering communication via the arts through unexpected projects, sees in Li Mu a great example of an artist exploring ways to return to his roots and expand his work back to his community"

With the Qiuzhuang project, Li Mu wants to explain to his family and relatives what he does and what art could bring to the people from his hometown. Classical modernist works might seem far from the experience of this new art audience and Mu is recording how they respond and what happens to the works in this new environment. Do they stay as art in our sense or do they take on different capacities and values.

Mu also seeks to explore the history of his village, since it is rather blur and no documentation before 1900 can be found. The history has never been recorded in writing, simply since no one ever cared about it, nor about the future. As today's life is changing in rural China, Mu wants to retrieve the history of his hometown and make it available in his library and to the villagers, hoping it will trigger new ways of thinking in the people.



The opening of the library

In February 2013, the library was opened. The library is a public space that connects the locals with the outside world and helps establish a reciprocal understanding. Through the library, Mu can spread his knowledge and experience gradually, let the villagers understand him, and acknowledge the next steps of the project. The library is open every Saturday and Sunday, free for all. Mu's retired elementary school teacher, employed as librarian, holds regular activities, including displays of art films and documentaries. Since the villagers have no experience with libraries and art, it was strange for them at first but they get accustomed to it and the children seem to love it.

As with the *FREE SOL LEWITT* project initiated by SUPERFLEX in 2010 in the Van Abbemuseum, Mu also created copies of the work *Untitled (Wall Structure)* (1972) by Sol LeWitt. These copies are distributed amongst people in his village and used in everyday life.



A villager in Qiu Zhuang with Sol LeWitt's *Untitled (Wall Structure)* (1972)

On walls along the roads in the village, Mu painted Sol LeWitt's *Wall Drawing* works. Richard Long's *Wood Circle* (1977) has been copied in the public space with leaves and branches, the most common materials by which Mu wanted this piece to "return" from a museum space to nature. Ulay and Abramovic's performance video is shown in the grocery store in the village, a place where people gather.

The project will continue until July 2013 and the library will remain as a permanent project.

Li Mu

Li Mu was born in 1974 in Qiu Zhuang in the Jiangsu Province in China. He graduated from the Suzhou Academy of Art and Design in 1995 and the Academy of Art of Tsinghua University, Beijing in 2001. He has had numerous group exhibitions throughout China and a solo exhibition at the Zendai Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai. Early on, Li worked mainly with video and photography, but over the last two years he has taken a new direction that cannot be easily categorized. Many of his recent works are more process-oriented actions that are very hard to distinguish from the rest of his daily activities. These ideas and actions are presented in a variety of different formats: as objects of documentation, piles of very detailed drawings in journals, photographs and writing on his blog (<http://www.iamlimu.org>).



Li Mu, sketch for Andy Warhol's *Mao Tse Tung* (1972) in Qiu Zhuang

Van Abbemuseum

The Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven is one of the first public museums for contemporary art to be established in Europe. The museum's collection of around 2700 works of art includes key works and archives by Lissitzky, Picasso, Kokoschka, Chagall, Beuys, McCarthy, Daniëls and Körmeling. The museum has an experimental approach towards art's role in society. Openness, hospitality and knowledge exchange are important. We challenge ourselves and our visitors to think about art and its place in the world, covering a range of subjects, including the role of the collection as a cultural 'memory' and the museum as a public site. International collaboration and exchange have made the Van Abbemuseum a place for creative cross-fertilisation and a source of surprise, inspiration and imagination for its visitors and participants.

Van Abbemuseum
Bilderdijklaan 10
Eindhoven, The Netherlands
www.vanabbemuseum.nl

Opening hours
Tuesday to Sunday 11:00 – 17:00
Every first Thursday of the month the museum is open until 21:00

Admission
Adults: € 12,- / Groups of 10 or more: € 9,- / Young people from 13-18 years, students / Eindhoven city pass (stadspas) holders: € 6,- / Museumkaart, children under 13 years of age: free of charge. / Family pass (2 adults and max. 3 children until 18 years): €18,-
First Thursday evening of the month from 17.00-21.00: free of charge.

Arthub Asia has positioned itself in a fragile yet important environment since its inception in 2007. It has not only thrived by participating in global knowledge flows and connected locality with the global picture, but also remained critical by simultaneously connecting and facilitating this locality within and to locality, from person to person, mind to mind, across Asia. In this capacity, Arthub Asia became a proxy, an experiment for local and global minds to connect freely and move wherever their imaginations and creative impulses take them, while at the same time pooling some degree of global authority on Asia's visual art spectrum. With this in mind, Arthub Asia has orchestrated collaboration through research, workshops, exhibitions, productions and publications.

www.arthubasia.org

For the editors:
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