

Interview conducted for *Qiuzhuang Project - Sol LeWitt and Lu Daode*
Davide Quadrio / Li Mu

Davide Quadrio (DQ): Please give us a brief description of the Qiuzhuang Project and its role in your overall artistic practice. What's the most important things you want to convey and to achieve through it?

Li Mu (LM): I went back to Qiuzhuang, my hometown, in the beginning of 2013 to initiate the *Qiuzhuang Project*. During the following year, I reproduced 10 pieces from the collection of the Van Abbemuseum in the Netherlands. These works were either permanently displayed in the public space of the village or shown in villagers' homes, becoming a part of their lives.

I went back to my hometown to reproduce these works because I wanted to build new channels of communication and to seek new perspectives to learn about my village by working together with my family and fellow villagers. Also, I hoped that the reproduction of Van Abbemuseum's collection of art would open a new window for the village.

Since 2008, my artistic practice has been centering on the problems I encounter and the confusion I feel as an urban dweller. To me, *Qiuzhuang Project* indicated a new opportunity for me to face my past, my birthplace and my family.

The project is like a journey through the soul, which allows me to no longer fear my rural village or feel the urge to escape. I feel grateful for everything there - all the happiness and unhappiness.

DQ: What's the consideration behind the title of this exhibition? You erased your own name. Why was that?

LM: The exhibition was entitled *Qiuzhuang Project - Sol LeWitt and Lu Daode*. During the project, I invited Lu Daode, an old painter in the village, to reproduce two of Sol LeWitt's wall paintings (*Wall Drawing No.256* and *Wall Drawing No.480*) together with me. If the collaboration could be seen as an "encounter" between Lu Daode and Sol LeWitt, then such an "encounter" was made possible through *Qiuzhuang Project*. And there's no need for my name to take a position in the exhibition title.

DQ: The preparation for "Qiuzhuang Project" lasted over five years. What are the ideas behind the exhibition structure and the selection of works? What do you want to show about "Qiuzhuang Project" through these works? What's the target for such social and cultural practice?

LM: In *Qiuzhuang Project*, I reproduced 10 artworks from the collection. Each of the reproductions could be displayed and discussed as an independent unit. Given the

gallery layout of Aurora Museum, I chose to feature the two Sol LeWitt wall paintings reproduced by Lu Daode, with some of the diary entries I wrote during this period.

If seen from the outside, *Qiuzhuang Project* was about the reproduced artworks; and if seen from the inside, we could see a very vivid and lively village, which consisted of people of varying experiences and personalities.

DQ: Later this year a more comprehensive picture of the “Qiuzhuang Project” will be put on display at Van Abbemuseum. What do you think will be the biggest difference between that one and this exhibition in Shanghai?

LM: In September *Qiuzhuang Project* will be put on display in Van Abbemuseum in a more comprehensive manner. Both the original artworks and the reproduced ones will be shown together at the museum. This time at Aurora Museum only a part of the project is shown, which could be seen as an in-depth exploration and presentation of one detail of the whole project.

DQ: Why did you choose those ten pieces from Van Abbemuseum’s collection? Did you take the local needs and taste of Qiuzhuang into consideration?

LM: In July 2011, I spent two weeks at Van Abbemuseum, trying to learn more about their collection of art. Due to language and cultural barriers, I chose a selection of works that I could understand and liked. Then I started to consider which ones could build connections with my village. Take Andy Warhol’s portraits of Mao Zedong for instance. Works like this would easily build an emotional connection with the village. In addition, I also chose some minimalist works. They didn’t carry much information within their appearance so villagers wouldn’t encounter language barriers when facing them. For now, it’s easier for rural villages to accept art “without content” and to imbue it with new possibilities.

DQ: Regional characteristics played a prominent role in the “Qiuzhuang Project” as it evoked and reconciled conflicts. How do you view the difference between the practice in Qiuzhuang and the presentation here at Aurora?

LM: *Qiuzhuang Project* is a process for artworks from a European museum to meet with a Chinese rural village. During the process, villagers produced and looked at the works. They were participants who perceived and felt the project from within. When *Qiuzhuang Project* was presented at Aurora Museum, I wanted to present my thinking on the project and to cast light on my understanding of the project in a rational manner. At Qiuzhuang, it was the villagers with whom I communicated and shared with; while at the museum, it was the museum visitors with whom I communicated and shared with.