

Continuity and Evolution: The Idea of “Co-creativity” in Chinese Art

Jinli He

Abstract: This paper seeks to explore an important characteristic of both traditional and contemporary Chinese art, that is, co-creativity. The author believes that co-creativity is a particular Chinese cultural sensibility that establishes the continuity of Chinese art and allows it to endure despite historical, societal, and political changes throughout the centuries. This paper starts with an introduction of the idea of co-creativity in Chinese culture. One of its embodiments is the relationship between *yin* and *yang*. *Yin* and *yang* both engender and fulfill each other, which is a co-relational and co-creative process. The paper then analyzes how the idea of co-creativity is demonstrated in traditional landscape painting through the expression of the oneness with nature and invitation to join a journey with the artist. Lastly, it demonstrates this continuous co-creative cultural sensibility through analyzing two contemporary artists' works. The author reads the submissive openness and vulnerability in Chinese female artist Chen Lingyang's works as a continuity of the co-creative spirit of *yin* and *yang*, of nature and human. Chen's work, rooted in her cultural sensibility, expresses a totally different statement of women's desires and conditions than does that of American feminist artists Judy Chicago and Carolee Schneemann. Likewise, performance artist Ma Liuming's *Fen-Ma Liuming in...* series seems inspired by nature's image of co-creating the world. Different as these works may be in their formal aspects—from painting to poetry, from photography to performance—“co-creativity” is at the heart of Chinese cultural expression.

Keywords co-creativity; cultural sensibility; landscape painting; Chen Lingyang; Ma Liuming

INTRODUCTION

Why co-creativity? My choice of this term and concept to describe a Chinese cultural sensibility that plays a role in the creation of art was inspired by a conversation I had with Professor Roger Ames several years ago. In their book *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong* (2001), Roger Ames and David Hall use “creativity” and “co-creativity” to translate the central concept *cheng* (誠) in the *Zhongyong*. As we know, *cheng* has been conventionally translated as sincerity or integrity. I raised the question of this discrepancy with Professor Ames while conducting an interview with him for a journal edited by a friend of mine in Shanghai. Ames's answer began with a discussion of the cosmological meaning of the concept *cheng* (Ames and Hall 2005, 438):

Cosmology is the projection of the human world onto the cosmos—the shaping of experience of the world with the lens of human feelings. This is certainly what we see in early Greek philosophy where “love” and “strife” are the creative forces which shape cosmic order. *Cheng* (誠) should be understood in a cosmological sense—that is in a philosophical sense. For this reason, *cheng* is not used in the conven-

Jinli He is assistant professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Trinity University, teaching Chinese art history, Chinese philosophy, civilization and literature. Her research interests include Chinese aesthetics and comparative aesthetics, Buddhist art in China and Contemporary Chinese art.

tional way, but with a philosophical import—the cosmos as a projection of human feelings. I take this to be a distinctive characteristic of the *Zhongyong*. What the *Zhongyong* does is to “cosmologize” human affect. The human being is co-creator with the cosmos—this is the main theme of the *Zhongyong*. It is just as we can see in the language of “on a par with *tian*” (*peitian*, 配天) and “the three powers” (*sancai*, 三才). The human being is the heartmind of the cosmos—its collaborator. With this kind of understanding you become aware of the fact that feeling is the foundation of creativity. Hence, translating *cheng* as “creativity” or “co-creativity” is not abandoning its meaning of “sincerity” because we in fact create each other—we literally “make” our friends. It is on this basis that we use this vocabulary. When you are in the process of creating yourself together with others, you should have integrity in the sense of “becoming one together.” You are not exclusively “yourself,” you are your relationships, and it is in these relationships that you become one together. So “integrity” too is the foundation of “creativity” and “co-creativity.” Hence, “creativity” or “co-creativity” does not abandon the conventional meaning of *cheng* as “sincerity” or “integrity,” but just appeals to a different way in which they are expressed.¹

Cultural translation is a charming and mysterious process of meaning aggrandizement. According to Ames, the reason for their use of “co-creativity” to translate the Chinese philosophical concept *cheng* is that the word “co-creativity” bears the same Chinese cultural sensibility that *cheng* implies (“cosmologizing human affect,” the continuity of *tian* and human, the sensibility of “becoming one together,” and so forth). Those qualities are essential for Chinese artists as their goal of creativity is an ongoing process of self-cultivation, being one together with the cosmos, nature, society, family, friends, and their surroundings. As Ames and Hall describe in their distinction of the notions of “power” and “creativity”:

Power relationships reduce creativity to modes of external causation...the world is sharply divided into *creators* and *created*—that is, *makers* and *made*...

Creativity is always reflexive and...with respect to “self”...is transactional and multi-dimensional. Thus creativity is both *self*-creativity and *co*-creativity.... All relations are transactional in the sense that they are reciprocal and mutually determinative. (Ames and Hall 2001,12-13)

One of the conventional embodiments of co-creativity is the relationship between *yin* and *yang*—they both engender each other and consummate each other, which is a co-relational and co-creative process. The concept of *yin* and *yang*, and by extension co-creativity, is an enduring theme of Chinese art. It is demonstrated in all aspects of artistic creativity: First, as I mentioned earlier, for a Chinese artist, the significance of artistic creativity is that consummating a work is a means by which to self-consummate. Secondly, co-creative sensibility is one of openness that is embodied in the Chinese artist’s attitudes toward nature, history, the viewer, and so forth. Handscroll painting is a fine example because its unique format often allows people other than the artist to become literally involved in the creation of art. In one case, a 15 x 41 inch framed landscape masterpiece from the Song dynasty was extended to twenty times its original length through the ages. Paintings, poetry, comments, and styled seals were added by friends, collectors, or viewers, and collectors from later generations continuously participated in this creative process. The moment the viewer unrolls the handscroll painting, he is also participating in this historical co-creative process. The masterpiece itself becomes an ongoing open “system” which creates art history and an

enduring self-creating process. The co-creative sensibility is the key to this distinctive Chinese tradition of art appreciation and creation.

Another example of this co-creative and open artistic relationship is the traditional art gathering, where artists enjoy creating a work together. The famous example is a work co-created by the Yuan masters Gu An (ca. 1289-1365), Yang Weizhen (1296-1370), Zhang Shen (dates uncertain), and Ni Zan (1301-1374) called *Old Tree, Bamboo and Rock* (1370-1373). The former three artists co-created the original work in 1370; the old tree was painted by Zhang Shen and the bamboo by Gu An. The middle left inscription was written by Zhang Shen and the upper left by Yang Weizhen. Three years later, after Gu An and Yang Weizhen had passed away, Ni Zan saw the painting and added the rock as well as a poem (upper right) to memorialize the late masters. The spirit of artistic co-creativity is well expressed in this single painting.

Finally, one of the unique characteristics of traditional Chinese art theory is that literature, painting, and other art forms share the same critical standards and aesthetic terms. For example, the famous poet and painter Wang Wei, who lived in the eighth century, was viewed favorably by later artists and poets because of the convertibility of his arts: “painting in poetry, poetry in painting” (Su Dongpo, 1981, 37). As the legend goes, the famous calligrapher Zhang Xu (eighth century), considered to be the sage of cursive style (*caoshu*), was inspired by the martial arts dancer Gongsun Daniang’s sword dance. The aesthetic terms such as *yun* (韻, rhythm), *shen* (神, spirituality), and *wen* (味, taste) are applied to all kinds of art styles, from calligraphy to painting, poetry, dance, sculpture and music.

Now I will turn to landscape painting to demonstrate how this cultural sensibility plays a role in the creation of that type of art.

CO-CREATIVITY AND LANDSCAPE PAINTING

Landscape painting was a major art form in traditional Chinese art and achieved its full development during the Song Dynasty (tenth-eleventh centuries). Jing Hao (tenth century), one of the leading artists of the “monumental style,” theorized that successful landscape painting was based on six essentials: *qi* (氣, spirit, energy, life breath), *yun* (韻, resonance and elegance), *si* (思, ideas), *jing* (景, scenery, i.e. “nature”), *bi* (筆, brush work), and *mo* (墨, ink wash) (Jing Hao 1963, 3). Jing’s goal was to make the internal nature (breath, resonance, ideas) harmonize with the external nature (scenery, and brush and ink—the tools for artistic creation). The process went something like this: through the artist’s contemplation of the natural world, the self-cultivated *qi* will find a way to resonate with the *qi* of the universe; then the artist rationalizes the process and expresses the harmony with *bi* (brush work) and *mo* (ink wash). This is not a one-way movement: to achieve and appreciate the resonance of *qi* requires mutual openness, reciprocity and co-creativity between the artist and the natural world.

Jing Hao’s idea of essentials was greatly influenced by the Neo-Confucian understanding of the relationship between the self and the outside world. Neo-Confucian thinking, which can be traced back to the eighth century but primarily developed during the Song Dynasty, was a new, synthesized ideology combining basic ideas of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, but claiming to be loyal to the Confucian tradition of the Great Way (the way of life, the cosmos) developed by Confucius (551-479 BCE), Zisi (481-402 BCE), and Mencius (372-289 BCE). Its followers aspired to achieve the great way through “self-cultivation.”

This self-cultivation starts with *qi* (spirit, energy, life, breath). *Qi* has always been the first and most important concept in traditional Chinese philosophy and aesthetics. The Confucian philosopher Mencius, whom Neo-Confucian scholars often quote, claimed that he was

Fig. 1. Yang Weizhen, Nizan, Gu An, Zhang Shen, *Old Tree, Bamboo and Rock*.

Yuan Dynasty (1370-1373), Taipei, Palace Museum. *Digitalarchivers*. Web. 4 December, 2011.

<http://catalog.digitalarchives.tw/item/00/03/fa/e7.html#archive>

good at cultivating his “flood-like *qi*” (浩然之氣), describing it as “most vast” (至大) and “most firm” (至剛) (Meng Tzu 1941), but he did not explain how to cultivate or achieve it. The Song dynasty Neo-Confucians explained that the utmost truth is cultivating your own flood-like *qi* to be one with the flood-like *qi* of the cosmos. Zhu Xi (1130-1200), the famous Song Neo-Confucian philosopher, later theorized and clarified: “Heaven and Earth (the cosmos) has the heart and mind of creativity, and this same heart and mind is attained in the creation of human and things” (Zhu Xi 1973, 4186; 天地以生物為心，而人物之生，又各得夫天地之心以為心者). For Zhu Xi, in other words, the heart and mind of the cosmos is united with the heart and mind of humankind. This is the ultimate truth of universe that the Neo-Confucians called *li* (理, principle, truth).

Applying this ideology to art, the great Chinese master tries to unify his mind with the mind of heaven and earth in his artistic creativity. The master studies nature until he or she reaches the point where he is able to capture nature’s heart and mind in his own heart and mind. Then he/she concentrates this cultivated life breath (*qi*) in the brush, in order to convey the *qi* of nature he achieved in his heart and mind.

In Chinese art theory, there is no such concept as “perspective,” instead there is *yuan* (遠, distance). The great Song landscape painter and theorist, Guo Xi (c.1020-c.1090), described three distances in landscape painting: *high distance* (高遠) (viewing from the bottom of a mountain to its peak); *level distance* (平遠) (viewing from a near mountain to a far mountain); and *deep distance* (深遠) (viewing from the front of a mountain to its back) (Guo Xi 1993, 500).

“Scientific perspective involves a view from a determined position and includes only what can be seen from that single point” (Sullivan 2008, 176). Chinese “distances,” on the other hand, are inclined to view “the part from the angle of totality” (Sullivan 2008, 176). Therefore, sometimes artists apply more than one “distance” in a piece of work, which requires shifting perspectives. Guo Xi’s work *Early Spring* (1072) has been viewed as a great example for applying “three distances”: first you see a tiny human figure at the bottom of the majestic mountain—this is called *high distance*. Then, changing your distance, your mind travels up, and you now use your *level distance*—you are among the mountains, and you see the beauty around you. As you travel deeper and higher, you “climb” the mountain and “see” more and more mountains behind the first one. This is the *deep distance*. The totalizing angle of Chinese landscape painting suggests that the viewer is going on a tour with the artist to participate in the journey of appreciation. This is a process of interaction. The harmonized *qi*, received by the Chinese master from his ongoing encounter with nature, is carried to the brush, and the brush becomes part of his body and of the harmonized *qi*. In his work there is always the resonance of his enjoyment of the harmony of *qi*, so that the work is made up of two natures coming together in utmost harmony—that of the artist and that of the cosmos. The artist uses his imagination to paint the harmony of a beautiful journey rather than a particular, static scene (such as a photograph would encapsulate) and he also invites the viewer to join him, thus extending the creativity outward, in an ongoing movement.

CO-CREATIVITY IN CONTEMPORARY CHINESE ART

This cultural sensibility of co-creativity even survives in some more radical contemporary art forms. Here I have chosen a young female artist who uses photography to make her artwork and a second who is a performance artist to demonstrate what I mean.

We shall first examine the work of Chen Lingyang.² Chen Lingyang was born in Zheji-

Fig. 2. Guo Xi, *Early Spring*, 1072, ink and color on silk, Palace Museum, Taipei. Courtesy of ArtStor, <http://www.artstor.org/>.

ang Province (south part of China) in 1975, and she graduated from Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing in 1999. She lives in Beijing and mainly works with installation and photography. Her works usually explore the beauty of female bodies and their intrinsic meanings. *Twelve Flower Months* is her most famous work.

Chinese women's art has received increasing international attention since the 1990s. More and more exhibitions have been held both in China and abroad—solo exhibitions, group exhibitions, and international exhibitions.³ There are numerous articles employing Western feminist movements as the standard to analyze Chinese women's art, reading it as a gesture of liberation of women. For example, in her article "Female Body: True and Beautiful - Chen Lingyang's *Twelve Flower Months* and Women's Self-Consciousness," the Chinese art critic Liao Wen relates Chen's work to American artists Judy Chicago and Carolee Schneemann, reading them as one and the same "female body," united in confronting "the truth of the female body." She describes how the works destroy the exoticization of the "female scent" (the "scent of a woman"), whose beauty is the object of male gaze and consumption, using the most "true" things—genitalia and menstrual blood—which had been taboo in traditional art, to show the real form of a woman's body. From this perspective, Wen concludes that "Chen uses the superficial traditional art form to form tradition, and the actual 'female scent' to destroy the '(traditional) female scent'.... Those 'new new' generation girls who were born in 1970s...growing up in a relatively open-minded social environment, and a gradually internationalizing age of information...inspire us with the self-consciousness and earnestness of their 'feminist' expression!" (Liao 2001)⁴

Unlike in Western art, the naked body never appears in traditional Chinese art history. As the body is the symbol of privacy, it makes perfect sense to see contemporary Chinese artists using it to express that historical repression. Indeed, I do not exclude a "feminist" interpretation of *Twelve Flower Months*. Such an analysis does have its insights, but it cannot exhaust the rich meaning of this work. My understanding of this work is that the cultural sensibility plays an even more important role than does a feminist one.

Although all three artists use the female "personal, everyday functions" to create their art, the visual expression of Chen's work is quite different from Chicago and Schneemann. One of Judy Chicago's (b. 1939) famous works is *Red Flag* (1971). Chicago interpreted viewers' failing to recognize the gesture in the photo as "removing a tampon" (some people thought it was a bloody penis, according to her) as showing how unwilling many men (and women!) are to look at women's personal, but everyday functions. Carolee Schneemann's (b.1939) *Interior Scroll* was performed in East Hampton, NY and at the Telluride Film Festival in Colorado in 1975. Schneemann ritualistically stood naked on a table, and later slowly extracted a paper scroll from her vagina and read a eulogy of a vagina from it: "...I saw the vagina as a translucent chamber of which the serpent was an outward model.... This source of interior knowledge would be symbolized as the primary index unifying spirit and flesh in Goddess worship" (Schneemann 1975). Both Chicago and Schneemann's works convey strong feminist messages. One criticizes the ignorance of a society full of both men and women who are unwilling to face the historically established inferiority of women; the other eulogizes the female sex. Those powerful gestures claim a war for the justice of women. I do not think the cultural sensibility behind Chen Lingyang's work *Twelve Flower Months* supports the same kind of interpretation.

I will start with a brief introduction of the background of Chen's work. After graduating from art school, Chen Lingyang lived in isolation. She did not work, seldom contacted friends, and lost or cut connections with public life for several months. She writes: "In that situation, the physical aspects of my identity became prominent: hunger, cold, and espe-

Fig. 3. Judy Chicago, *Red Flag* 65/94, 1971, photo lithgraph, Collection of Constance Gee. Courtesy of ArtStor (ID 174), <http://www.artstor.org/>.

Fig. 4. Carolee Schneemann, *Interior Scroll*, performance, 1975, ©2007 Carolee Schneemann/ARS, New York. Courtesy of ArtStor, <http://www.artstor.org/>.

Fig. 5. Chen Lingyang, *Twelve Flower Months*. photograph. Nov.1999-Dec.2000. *Xindong Cheng Space For Contemporary Art Website*, 28 June. 2011.

http://www.chengxindong.com/index.php?option=com_rsgallery2&gal_id=131&page=showImages&id=1080&NewsID=319&Itemid=5&lang=en

cially menstruation, and menstrual pain, emotional turbulence, and so on. I became aware of the cycles of day and night, the slow growth of plants and the changing patterns of the weather..." (Chen 2003). This emotional experience inspired Chen to create *Twelve Flower Months* (Nov.1999-Dec. 2000), a "real work" about menstruation. The work took twelve months and consists of handmade enlarged color photos. Each picture uses the perennial blossom of that month, as well as a mirror of a different classical shape reflecting the genitalia and menstrual blood of Chen's own body; the borders of the photographs imitate the shapes of the windows and doors of traditional Chinese gardens; the flowers shown in each photograph are the blossoms of each month of the traditional Chinese calendar. Drawn from her year of self-imposed exile, *Twelve Flower Months* is extraordinarily private and self-reflective, while at the same time expressive of Chen's effort to emerge from isolation and establish an intimate connection with the world. Because of its attempt to connect to the viewer through culturally-recognized symbols, this work can be viewed as being created in a co-creative spirit with nature and culture despite the fact that its visual language and artistic expression differ from the traditional landscape painting I discussed above.

The menstrual blood in this work reflects woman's nature, echoing the nature of the cosmos, and the blossoms of the monthly flowers. The mirrors and self-portraits draw the viewer into the image. The classical shapes of the mirror and the light, the shapes of the borders of the photographs, and even the placement of the flowers have cultural resonance. The open blossom and the opened body in the reflected mirror and the gaze of the camera all emphasize the idea of openness. But this openness is not a strong, open statement as is clearly expressed in Chicago and Schneemann's works, rather it implies a continuity of nature and culture.

It is worth quoting the artist's own interpretation of her work here. Chen Lingyang composed a "self-interview" between "Chen Lingyang No. 2" (C2) and herself (C1):

C2: Your work (*Twelve Flower Months*) seems to have a very strong emotional expression...

C1: Yeah. But I don't want to explain this. I want to leave the space of interpretation to the viewers. Of course, I'm happy to hear the opinions and discussions from the others' own perspectives.

C2: Some people say that your work expresses privacy. When a private work is exhibited in a public space, it is hard to anticipate, or in other words, to control the consequences...

C1. In some sense, it is aimed to have an impact upon the public space.

Let me start from the background of this work. We are all familiar with the idea of "*Tian ren he yi*" (the oneness of *tian* [nature] and the human) in traditional Chinese culture. It is said that the utmost self-cultivated person achieves the feeling of oneness with the *cosmos* and the *ten thousand things*; she totally loses herself in the mysterious aesthetic world, loses all human feelings, such as joy, anger, sorrow, pleasure, right, wrong, good or evil. *Tian* is the rhythm of the cosmos (come back and go, round, round again); women can feel this cosmic rhythm from her monthly physical (consequently, psychological) changes.

When people view this work in a public space, they may have various opinions. However, the work itself also offers the possibility to deconstruct those interpretations. The traditional allusions make this deconstruction possible. Engendering and deconstructing, like the cycles of *Tian*.

It is this relation of constructing and deconstructing that gives birth to new possibilities.

C2. I notice that the duration of *Twelve Flower Months* is one year and it includes twelve photographs. You seem to give prominence to this.

C1. Yes. The twelve photographs appear together as a completed work. Just as I mentioned above, this work is related to the pattern and rhythm of the circulation of things. A year is a completely basic palingenesis of time. Where is the beginning and where is the ending actually doesn't matter, it just goes round and round, but each moment is unrepeatable...In a word, apparently, it is a year, but actually it is an infinite time conception." (Chen 2001)⁵

I would like to introduce another of Chen's works, *The 25th hour* (2002), to deepen the contrast between Chen Lingyang's work and that of Chicago and Schneemann.

While the concepts of privacy and openness, the oneness of nature and culture informed *Twelve Flower Months*, *The 25th hour* can be read as women's dialogue and communication with the real world. Yet there is continuity between the two works, especially concerning Chinese women's sensibilities, including the established cultural co-creative spirit and openness. *The 25th hour* was created in 2002 and is a digital photograph. A giant woman kneels down, her face hidden, on a top of a dark warehouse; around her is the night sky and many industrialized city buildings. In the introduction to this work, Chen says,

This 'giantess' is not really very brave, and so she will only freely change her size and make these kinds of gestures when the clock strikes 25:00.

Very often, the real world and the male world get mixed up in my mind. They both come from outside me; they both exist very forcefully, with initiative, power and aggression. Facing these two worlds, I often feel that I am weak and helpless, and don't know what to do. But just being alive means that I cannot avoid them, not even for one day. I wish that every day there could be a certain time like 25:00, when I could become as large as I like, and do whatever I want. (Chen 2002)

Reading this work from a feminist perspective, we will see how different are the visual messages Chen and Chicago and Schneemann convey in their expressions of women's desire and transcendence. The giant, kneeling Chinese woman is so different from her Western sister who stands up with her powerful body right in the center of the stage to show how her strength and height—everything a patriarchal society takes to be symbolic of power. But that stage is for monologues—it is not intended to arouse dialogue. Chen's giant Chinese woman, on the other hand, kneels down under the twilight sky, amid the steel and concrete forest which is much more powerful, more "giant" than she is. There is no central stage; the stage for her is unstable and dangerous. As she kneels down and bends her naked body, she takes the risk of being exposed, of being taken advantage of. She waits there, her head and eyes covered, and seems to totally relinquish her rights to the viewer. This silent,

Fig. 6. Chen Lingyang, *25:00 No.1*, C- Print, 2002. *Chinesische Gegenwartskunst*. Web. 29, June.2011.

<http://www.chinesische-gegenwartskunst.de/pages/galerie.php?catid=07-01-29&id=15>

submissive gesture is a kind of openness, like the openness of nature. This gesture invites communication, as nature invites the participation of humans. It might be too ideal, too dangerous, and too hopeless. It certainly requires a most sensitive heart from the viewer to appreciate this gesture, lift her head and remind herself that she is actually as “giant” as anyone. I read the submissive openness and vulnerability in this work as a continuity of the co-creative spirit of *yin* and *yang*, nature and human. Chen’s work, rooted in her cultural sensibility, expresses a totally different statement of women’s desires and conditions than do Chicago and Schneemann.

This sensibility is also reflected in performance artist Ma Liuming’s work. Ma Liuming was born in 1969 in Huangshi, Hubei Province, China. He graduated from the Hubei Academy of Fine Arts in 1991 with a focus on oil painting. After graduation, Ma Liuming moved to Beijing and began making nude performance pieces. He wears his hair long and has feminine features, and his androgynous look is an important part of his art. Makeup helps to transform his face into his female alter ego, Fen (*Fen*, 芬 is a very common female name in China). The coexistent sex egos in this single artist remind us of the co-creative relationship between *yin* and *yang*.

Ma Liuming’s *Fen-Ma Liuming* in... series displays the idea of openness and invitation. For this particular project, Ma Liuming took sleeping pills and placed a camera in front of him to record the whole scene of his co-creativity. We can see from the photographs how the audience reacted. Some people made the same gesture as him. A lady took off one of her stockings and rolled it on to one of his legs. A young boy kissed him with a reverential attitude. Two guys made some funny postures with him. The willingness of the artist to surrender to his audience reminds us of the silence of nature. Nature is always there, inviting us to enjoy the harmony of the universe. She gives the choice to you: you can choose to offer respect, friendship, appreciation, or violence. I view Ma Liuming’s performance as a gesture of nature’s openness and invitation. The work reminds us to ask ourselves: do we cultivate ourselves as the self—the so-called master of the universe? Or can we be sensitive enough to nature’s openness and invitation to participate in the great harmony—that is, to co-create the world?

“Co-creativity” is an enduring theme in Chinese art. It can be traced to the artist’s goal of harmonizing one’s “flood-like” *qi* with the *qi* of the cosmos. The artist is not just a creator, but is also created, and in this spirit, he or she invites the viewer to be part of the creative process. In landscape painting, it is the oneness with nature and invitation to “enter the scene,” as well as a journey with the artist. In contemporary art, it is the expression of the artist’s openness and vulnerability. Different as these works may be in their formal aspects—from painting to poetry, from photography to performance—each one demonstrates that “co-creativity” is the heart of Chinese cultural expression.

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Fig. 7. Ma Liuming, *Fen-Ma Liuming* in Lyon, 2001. *ARTLINKART Data*. Web. 29 June, 2011.

http://www.artlinkart.com/cn/artist/wrk_sr/ab2bsz/b5aa

Fig. 8. Ma Liuming, *Fen-Ma Liuming* in Munich, Germany, 1999. *ARTLINKART Data*. Web. 29 June, 2011.

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NOTES

1. Ames and Jinli He (interview), "The Meaning of Cultural Dialogue," June 2004. This interview was included in the Chinese translation of Ames and Hall's *Thinking through Confucius* (1987. Albany: State University of New York Press. Chinese version: 2005. Beijing: Peking University Press). The paragraph quoted here was revised by professor Roger Ames.
2. I have used the case of Chen Lingyang in another article, "Second Sex and Contemporary Chinese Women's Art: A Case Study on Chen Lingyang's Work" (in *Subversive Strategies in Contemporary Chinese Art*, edited by Mary Bittner Wiseman and Liu Yuedi, 2011. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 147-169), to discuss the difference between the characters of contemporary Chinese women's art and Western women's art. I have revised section of that work for the purpose of this paper.
3. To name just a few exhibitions inside of China: *Female Artists' world* (I,1990, II,1995, III,2000, Beijing); *Century, Women* (1998, Beijing); *Women Declaration: Contemporary Women Artists' Exhibition* (2004, Shanghai) *SHE: Ten Female Artists' Works*, (2004, Beijing), *Dream, Dilemma, Modern Feminine Nature* (2004, Beijing), *Between Liberation and Bondage* (2005, Beijing); *Combination: Female Artists' Exhibition* (2006, Beijing) [titles are all my translations].
4. My translation.
5. My translation.