

MEDIA REVIEWS

2010-2011

Author: Colin Chinnery

MadeIn Company is a 'cultural production' company founded by the Chinese conceptual artist Xu Zhen in 2009. By dissolving his identity into a commercial company rather than an artist collective, Xu explores the possibility of a contemporary artist dissolving into China's larger ideological constructs. MadeIn's latest show, 'Action of Consciousness', is a conceptual sequel to their previous show, 'Physique of Consciousness', shown this spring at Long March Space in Beijing. Both titles are a play on the Chinese word for ideology, which translates into English literally as 'form of consciousness'. MadeIn Company has taken the troubled relationship between art and ideology as its theme and has branched it out in separate formal directions, where each series of works seems deliberately to seek out the troubling aura of ideology in different ways.

'Action of Consciousness' took up both of ShanghART's Shanghai spaces. Upon entering Space 1 visitors were confronted with *Play-1* (all works 2011), a sculpture of a naked African tribeswoman with a massive lip plate and flamboyant headdress hanging from the ceiling in Japanese style rope bondage or *kinbaku*. The double meaning of 'bondage' here is potentially more disturbing than amusing to Western visitors, but to a local Chinese audience who do not suffer from post-colonial slave-trade guilt, this play on cultural motifs is simply an association of fetishistic Asian sexual practice with fetishistic African cultural practice. However, when one considers the powerful role China is currently playing in Africa, the work grows more ideological.



The eponymous work of the show features a 350 x 350 x 240 cm white box with no ceiling from which dozens of unique works created by MadeIn are thrown into the air and fall back into the box. Works with titles such as *Animals' Conception of History* and *Sexy Life* appear for a fleeting instant above the walls of the enclosure only to fall back into oblivion. This 'Action of Consciousness' is possibly the mind of the artist, where ideas form and coalesce or get thrown back into the soup of the unconscious.

Space 2 opens up into a den of overbearing mock-African-style polyurethane foam sculptures, each called *Divinity*. Works such as *Divinity – Human Insect Hybrid*, *Divinity – Marx*, *Divinities Community – 01* and many others crowded one's mind with references both real and fake, in a style that takes the representation

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Author: Colin Chinnery

of divine form very seriously – threatening viewers with their tongue-in-cheek contemporary voodoo. Next to these fake deities, a series of photo-realistic paintings depicting scenes of decrepit poverty in the Chinese countryside hung on the walls. The paintings were each mounted on gaudy gold frames, created to be hung in the ostentatious mansions of wealthy Chinese collectors.

'Action of Consciousness' is an exhibition that is easy to enjoy but hard to grasp. MadeIn have stated their aim to create misunderstandings through a mediation of media. Perhaps this is a good interpretation of ideology – media's ability to create a multiplicity of misunderstandings; what Giorgio Agamben describes as the liturgy of democracy.





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 Date: Dec. 2011
 Headline: *MadeIn Company, "Physique of Consciousness"*
 Author: Lee Ambrozy

8

MADEIN COMPANY, "PHYSIQUE OF CONSCIOUSNESS" (Long March Space, Beijing)

The centerpiece of this exhibition was *Physique of Consciousness*, a thirty-minute exercise routine consisting of ten movements. Created by consulting a wide range of traditional meditation techniques and ceremonial gestures, the routine continues the Chinese tradition of exercise-as-ideology: The Boxers had their secret martial arts, Yan'an Communists their *yangge*. MadeIn's exercises—tailor-made for the urban globalist—are a political statement for our plural age.



8. Above: MadeIn Company, *Physique of Consciousness* (Exercise 3), 2011. Performance view, Long March Space, Beijing, April 15, 2011.

9. Below: View of "Will You Miss Me When I Burn?" 2011, C-Space, Beijing. Foreground: Guan Xiao, 4 Years Old, 2010. Background: Zhou Yi, *Ink*, 2010.

Publication: Leap
Date: Aug. 2011
Headline: MadeIn
Company: *Physique
of Consciousness*
Author: Angie Baecker



MadeIn Company: Physique of Consciousness

Author: Angie Baecker

The title of MadeIn Company's latest exhibition at Long March Space is something of an awkward phrase—after all, how can consciousness be physical? But the phrase is deceiving: the four character Chinese phrase for “Physique of Consciousness” is just one character different from the Chinese for “ideology,” suggesting that through minor manipulation, ideology can be given concrete form, expressing itself in all manners of cultural production.

In this exhibition, ideology takes the particular form of athletic exercise. Long March Space's main hall is given over to the eponymous exercise regimen, a half-hour performance by three individuals on blue yoga mats wearing grey warm ups. A second room is filled with airbrush paintings and sculptures made of sponge, such as *Prey: Cervine Tiger*, white sponge carved into the shape of an animal hide and spray-painted with black stripes. As the foam ages, its color ripens from white to orange, turning the zebra hide into a tiger hide. These are the works that bear the closest resemblance to previous works by

MadeIn Company; echoing prior works, we find digitally inspired acrylic on canvas, for example, cheeky cloth dolls scattered around the exhibition, and canvases made of highly tactile cloth.

The performance work, however, most directly reflects the exhibition's premise. The workout routine is divided into ten parts, each informed by different historical traditions and forms of dance. Part two, for example, features hand movements derived from poses of worship, while part four features more vigorous gestures derived from ceremonies, folklore, and even trance. Wall text describes how each portion of the workout tones not only physique, but consciousness as well: part nine allows the participant to achieve “deliverance from negative thought,” while the entire workout “aims to provide a solution to the continuous antagonism between body and mind.”

In fact, each of the traditions that the “Physique of Consciousness” workout draws from carries its own set of culturally specific markers, its own distinct ideology. For example,

many of the movements in part five are derived from yoga; while yoga has come to signify New Age trends, we often forget its origins in the specific meditative practices of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, each with its own history. Moves from part six are inspired by various traditions that involve venerating the earth, making the “Physique of Consciousness” workout an amalgamation of movements as cultural signifiers, a sort of greatest hits compilation of cultural references and dance traditions.

“Physique of Consciousness” presents us with a notion of the body as text, and through its performers, we observe how the body, as a text, inscribes history and culture upon itself, actively engaging ideological tradition through its very embodiment. “Physique of Consciousness” becomes a question, then, not only of consciousness (i.e. How conscious are we of the ideologies that inform our movements?), but also of free will: How much of this has been predetermined? And to what extent do we have agency over our own actions?

MADEIN

Author: MadeIn Company

Publication: Artforum
Date: Feb. 2011
Headline: *MadeIn*
Author: MadeIn Company



MADEIN

MADEIN COMPANY IS AN ENTERPRISE. All the people here have been hired: They are employees of the company. The company is like an army, and all the employees are superstars.

Our everyday work consists of creating, unceasingly. The company's rule is to urge people to create. This is not too different from the way many artists work, other than that the system of the company is not based on deception, as often happens in the art world; every employee here is credited.

Since its establishment in 2009, MadeIn Company has curated and participated in numerous exhibitions, and produced various series of works, including collages and installations based on political cartoons ("Spread"), "Middle Eastern-style" works that touch on cultural clichés and globalization ("Seeing One's Own Eyes" and "Lonely Miracle"),

and photographs and videos of artworks, dealing with the power of media ("True Image"). MadeIn Company was also part of the Ho Chi Minh Trail project, presented this year at the Shanghai Biennale.

Aside from these projects—developed by our creation department, MadeIn Laboratory—there is MadeIn Space, which organizes projects with other artists, and MadeIn Research Center, where studies in fields ranging from art to psychology to sociology are being carried out. We also support the online contemporary art forum Art-Ba-Ba.

What is exciting for us is the corporatization system. It is a very good way of displacing the anxiety of creation, without any individual representation. Not aspiring to uniqueness might, in a sense, be a freedom. □

MADEIN COMPANY IS BASED IN SHANGHAI.



MadeIn, *In mass exercise, the greater the conflict between theory and reality, the stronger its eagerness to impose beliefs on others*, 2010, color photograph, 59 x 103 1/2". From the series "True Image," 2010—

Hot Work Above a Frozen City

Author: Jan Dalley

As the Frieze Art Fair opened its mighty tents for the eighth year, records tumbled. During the VIP preview day on Wednesday, when most of the serious buyers were on the prowl, the excited whispers around the fair were of the sale by White Cube gallery of a large Damien Hirst installation entitled “The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths” (2006), for £3.5m (\$5.6m) – which, according to Frieze co-founder Matthew Slotover, is probably the most expensive work to change hands at the fair. It takes the form of three huge steel-framed cabinets with hundreds of fish in perspex and formaldehyde adorning its shelves.

At almost the same moment, a wandering journalist put a £1 token into a grab-a-toy machine, an installation on the stand of Beijing’s Long March gallery, and became the proud owner of a snarling pink pig with a trigger for genitals. This must surely be the least expensive work ever to change hands at Frieze.

With deals such as these, how could the overall mood of the fair be other than thoroughly buoyant? This year’s edition houses 173 galleries, an increase of nine on last year, including the “Frame” section for younger galleries. In this section, an innovation last year, each gallery shows only one artist, in smaller stands, beyond the point where the expensive carpet runs out – the atmosphere is less refined here.

Back among the grander stands, business seemed good. Iwan Wirth, of Hauser & Wirth, said: “This year’s Frieze appears to have fewer works on a domestic scale” – and certainly, looking around at the huge canvases by Gilbert and George (at David Zwirner), one knows what he means. Many of these works would only work in a warehouse. “This is a very good sign,” Wirth continued. “It shows that there is plenty of confidence, plenty of very serious buying.” His own morning had been excellent, he said, with important sales of which the biggest was a Paul McCarthy collage/drawing that fetched an impressive \$375,000. Sprüth Magers gallery, too, enjoyed their morning, with healthy sales including one of American artist George Condo’s dark, humorous grotesques entitled “Ecstatic Figures” (2010), for \$180,000. These works



and many others were destined for private collections but there are institutional buyers too. Hauser & Wirth had a beautiful, enormous work by Roni Horn, a photo-installation entitled “Clowd and Cloun (Gray)” composed of 32 pieces, “on hold” for a museum.

Tate is another regular Frieze customer. Each year, the group of philanthropists who comprise the Outset Fund donate about £120,000 for a Tate shopping spree – among the less expensive items, obviously. Prominent guest curators are invited to help choose – this year’s was Daniel Birnbaum, director designate of the Moderna Museet, Stockholm. And, as ever, some prudent buying enabled the gallery to acquire a small haul of international works: three small pieces by the late Slovakian artist Július Koller, from Vienna’s Galerie Martin Janda; an installation by the American Jimmie Durham (b.1940) from Kurimanzutto gallery, Mexico City; and “Five Day Forecast” (1991), gelatin prints and engraved plaques by another American, Lorna Simpson (b.1960), at Salon 94, New York.

The commissioned works that form the Frieze Projects are also on display, outside in Regent’s Park and inside the tents. Everyone’s favourite is the extended piece by Cartier Award winner Simon Fujiwara, entitled “Frozen”: slabs of glass in the floor of the marquees let us peer down into the remains of a lost city below. Timelessness amid the contemporary hurly-burly.

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Author: Jan Dalley

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 Author: Colin Chinnery

by COLIN CHINNERY

August 9, 2010

"MadeIn: Don't Hang Your Faith on the Wall," Long March Space, Beijing

LONG MARCH SPACE, Beijing

30 May – 8 August 2010

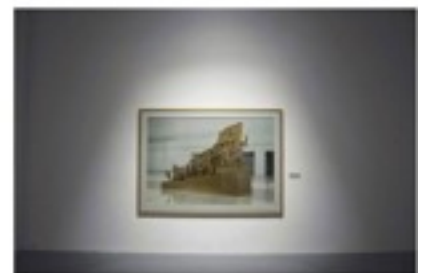
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MadeIn is a cultural production company founded a year ago by the Chinese experimental artist Xu Zhen. He founded the company in an attempt to define and combine his various outputs beyond his own artwork, such as the non-profit space BizArt, China's leading online contemporary art forum Art-Ba-Ba (which translates as "art daddy" or "art shit" depending on the tones of "ba-ba"), and his curatorial work. By branding everything he does like some Hollywood studio, he hides his own identity behind a corporate façade. But we still know it's him behind the mask. His corporate identity has added an extra layer of signification to his work: it's a matter of representation, of how we signify what we see.

The exhibition "Don't Hang Your Faith on the Wall" is an extension of this fundamental attitude towards representation. The show consists of installation, sculpture, and two-dimensional works each with a title taken from philosophy or the media. The original works, however, were not shown. Instead, the works were



1 MadeIn. The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting. 2010



2 View of "MadeIn: Don't Hang Your Faith on the Wall"

"MadeIn: Don't Hang Your Faith on the Wall", Long March Space, Beijing

Author: Colin Chinnery

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show. The exhibition contributes to the discussion of what constitutes an artwork as examined by Walter Benjamin in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" and by many scholars since. Boris Groys, referring to Benjamin's article in the chapter "Art in the Age of Biopolitics: From Artwork to Art Documentation" from his book *Art and Power*, described the difference between the original artwork and its representation when he wrote "Art documentation is by definition not art; it merely refers to art, and in precisely this way makes it clear that art, in this case, is no longer present and immediately visible but rather absent and hidden." MadeIn makes a direct and substantial challenge to Groys's statement. When contemporary artistic production has increased to the extent that a vast majority of artworks can only be seen and understood from reproductions on websites and in magazines, MadeIn asks what actual difference remains between the artwork and its representation. By deliberately cancelling out the divide between the two categories, MadeIn categorically states that art has no more "aura."

It is significant that this new argument in the theory of representation comes from the peripheries, rather than from the traditional centers of modern and contemporary artistic production—Europe and the US. Xu Zhen has a fear of flying, which means he cannot travel to Europe or the US to see the original masterworks of modern and early contemporary art. This lack of access is symbolic of most artists living around the world within the globalized contemporary platform. If one can only understand a work by seeing the original and by being exposed to its "aura," then what does it mean for thousands of artists around the world who do not have such access?

The implications of MadeIn's project don't stop here. Things become even more interesting when thinking about how such work is represented in print media or the web. There will be no way of knowing that the actual artwork is its documentation. It cancels itself out, both in form and in concept.

The Path to Appearance is Always...

Author: Andrew Maerle

Interview of Xu Zhen

Published: ART iT July 2, 2010

The path to appearance is always accessible and traveled but one can go around it. (2010), installation with baseball bat and golf ball. Courtesy the artist and Long March Space, Beijing.

It would be misleading to say that Xu Zhen is one of China's leading young conceptual artists. Born in 1977 and based in Shanghai, Xu has been active as a multimedia artist and curator for over a decade now since graduating from the Shanghai Art and Design Academy, a technical college, in 1996. A co-founder in 1998 of the influential artist-run space BizArt Art Center, he has also organized seminal exhibitions including 1999's "Art for Sale," staged at a Shanghai shopping mall. As an artist Xu revels in tipping over the sacred cows of social convention. He has made installations of oversized tampons and vitrines - mocking British artist Damien Hirst - containing a life-scale model dinosaur split into two halves and suspended in formaldehyde. For the multimedia work *18 Days* (2006), Xu traveled to China's border territories and staged military invasions into neighboring countries using remote-controlled tanks, planes and boats, while in *An Animal* (2006), the artist filmed a panda-like creature undergoing assisted ejaculation. Perhaps the artist's best-known work to date, the multimedia installation *8848-1.86* (2005) documents a fictional but almost credible expedition to chop off a man-sized chunk from the peak of Mount Everest, and comes complete with the result of the expedition displayed in an gigantic, refrigerated trophy case.

In 2009, Xu announced that he would stop practicing as a solo artist and instead operate under the company name MadeIn, working in collaboration with a staff of over 10 other artists, technicians and coordinators. This move has expanded the diversity of genres that Xu employs, and one of the company's first projects was to produce a series of works, ranging from paintings and sculptures to installations, purporting to have been made by contemporary Middle Eastern artists. In MadeIn's current exhibition at Long March Space in Beijing, "Don't Hang Your Faith on the Wall," works named after quotes by famous intellectuals parody long-established approaches to minimalist and conceptual art. ART iT met with Xu Zhen at his studio in Shanghai as he was preparing for the Beijing exhibition to discuss topics ranging from the performance of spectatorship to the international fascination

with Chinese contemporary art and the question of what defines ethics.

ART iT: You recently stopped working as a solo artist and have now established your own company, MadeIn, through which you produce works. What was the motivation for that development?

XZ: I've always made a wide range of works and projects, so I thought it would be better to consolidate everything under one name. MadeIn is very similar to an advertising agency. I am like a CEO. I give my staff an assignment, they go back and come up with proposals and then I review them, decide what works, play around with them, add to them, recombine them, and come up with a finished product that could be completely different from where it started. Because we are all working for a company, we can communicate and collaborate directly. It's much more straightforward than a collaboration between two individual artists. Nobody's keeping tabs on degrees of authorship. I think a good way to look at it is that great works are something you discover, not something you create. I feel I would be limited in what I could discover if I were working on my own.

ART iT: Since you started MadeIn do you ever make works yourself?

XZ: Never. Even before, I rarely made my own works. Usually I'd come up with an idea and then find someone to produce it for me. Now for example I'm composing works on the computer and then my staff paint them for me.

ART iT: What's the difference between what you're doing and someone like Zhang Xiaogang, who has a studio full of assistants making his paintings?

XZ: I feel the bulk of "Chinese painting" is not art. It's purely commercial product. There was a moment in history when those artists actually were making significant contributions, but now they've strayed from the idea of art itself.

We feel that MadeIn is fundamentally different. The works we make are a satire of the market. Of course we are also aware that they will become commercial products that circulate in the market. There's a conflict there, but we hope that the project can maintain several different directions that coexist at once. Some works will be directed at the market, others may be more academic and completely unmarketable. So to the extent there are conflicts in our aspirations for these projects, we actually embrace those conflicts.

ART iT: What was the idea behind MadeIn's "Middle Eastern Art" project, in which works drew heavily upon clichéd images and materials associated with the Middle East?

XZ: For us the whole Middle Eastern art project was a kind of performance. We were playing with relationships of active looking

and objectification. We wanted to see what would happen when we added a third culture into the dynamic of two cultures - China and the West - mutually regarding each other. So if the West is looking at China, and China then looks at the Middle East, when we make works that are supposed to be "Middle Eastern," are those works intended for a Chinese audience, or are they intended for a Western audience? Anybody who sees the Middle Eastern series will either think it meets their expectations or it doesn't meet their expectations. This reaction is partially determined by the viewer's own experiences, and so what we were trying to address were the issues behind how expectations construct viewpoints.

ART iT: One interesting thing about Chinese contemporary painting to me is that even certain established artists will make one series of work for a few years, and then make a completely different series three years later, with no apparent stylistic or conceptual relationship between the two. So such artists seem to be seeking change for the sake of change. Then of course as you say your own works vary widely.

XZ: I understand what you're getting at. It's related to the art system in China, which allows artists to get away with anything. Why is that? First, we lack critics. And then we also lack a structure for artists to mature. The opportunities I have as an artist are not so different from those of someone who is 20 years old now. In terms of criticism, discussion, theory, it's all the same. There is no support for established practices.

And because there are no standards - no one to say what's good or not - it's easy for artists to think that they can make one kind of work one day and a completely different work the next. Artists of my age have all come through this.

Ultimately I feel that contemporary art in China, in terms of method, execution, conceptualization and depth, is too simplistic. The attitude is, "make it however you want to make it." We lack the kind of knowledge to discuss issues deeply, and I honestly feel it's a problem affecting all of the art here. I would argue that in my own works though there is a clear line of thought that links them together.

ART iT: Yes, and I suppose you could also turn the situation on its head and say that the lack of structure allows artists in China an enviable freedom. Is the fact that you didn't attend a higher-degree art school a positive for you?

XZ: I'm glad that I didn't go to university. Now that I am aware of the kinds of things they were teaching at that time, at the very least I can say it wouldn't have suited me.

ART iT: But you have also been involved in the establishment of artist-run spaces like BizArt Art Center and Shopping Gallery. What is the appeal of curation for you?

XZ: I enjoy it. I don't think artistic production is limited to making works. It can also be discussion, curating exhibitions, making publications. I think creativity

should develop in all directions. For example the experience these past few years running BizArt has helped me both as a curator and as an artist. And sometimes when you're making a work it's more like you are curating or preparing the work than physically making it.

As a curator, every time you apply yourself to organizing an exhibition, your own ideas change as well. This opportunity to reconsider your own thought process, or to move across different degrees of thought processes, is the most interesting part of curation for me.

ART iT: In 2006 you worked on the exhibition "The Real Thing: Contemporary Art from China" at Tate Liverpool, which seemed to be one of the more focused China surveys to take place in Europe and the US in recent years. What was that experience like?

XZ: There were two other curators, Karen Smith and Simon Groom, and I was just helping them out. The exhibition was in fact a rather typical "cultural tourism" project. My contribution was simply to make a list of artist recommendations, because there was no room in the exhibition framework to address substantial issues. These culturally oriented exhibitions always come out being somewhat politically correct or promotional, so they're not interesting to me, although I don't have a problem helping out if I'm asked.

ART iT: Does that reflect your general opinion about the phenomenon of China surveys in Europe and the US?

XZ: This is precisely why we wanted to do the Middle Eastern Art project. People have preconceptions about the world, and often see the things they want to see, or find what they want to find. I've always been apathetic toward the China surveys. And now I have no interest in such exhibitions whatsoever. As an artist you say, "OK, if there are several different kinds of exhibitions, then this is only one of them and it's not the most important."

I've declined to participate in many such exhibitions because they're just too limiting. This includes even exhibitions taking place in China surveying the history of Chinese contemporary art, for example shows about the past 30 years of art in China, or the past 30 years of painting, and so on. The curators take an egoistic approach to documenting these histories, rather than maintaining a detached perspective. It makes me uneasy.

ART iT: How do you feel about the idea of a history of Chinese contemporary art, has it already been established or is it still undergoing formation?

XZ: There is already a history here, but it's not very significant. There has been a lot of discussion about this situation recently. Over the past 35-odd years of Chinese contemporary art, there have been four or five major figures, and each of these figures maintains their own set of historical values, and even today those values tend to be self-centered or, perhaps, domestic. Of course China is still developing, but there are very few artists here who are thinking about

producing something that could be of value or significance to the international context. Commercial artists like Zhang Xiaogang may have been significant in the 1980s and '90s, but I feel that as history has changed, and the environment has changed, they haven't changed at all. Or rather their change has been to turn art into commerce.

ART iT: How do you feel about international art?

XZ: Well, I'm also frustrated with international art. Everybody seems to be reviving relatively old concepts, including relational aesthetics and multimedia art - even someone like Isaac Julien. After the opening of his show at ShanghART Gallery for his new installation *Ten Thousand Waves*, which was filmed in China, I went to dinner with other artists and we felt that the work was very mainstream, very "correct."

ART iT: Can you explain more about your impressions of *Ten Thousand Waves*?

XZ: My first impression was that it was superficial in its use of images of China, then I thought there's no way an artist like Isaac could be so superficial. After watching the whole thing I realized it's not the work itself but the issues that Isaac wants to discuss that have been simplified. Issues of immigration, or the issues that arise from the process of people seeking their livelihoods - issues of reality, life, history, social reform; these are some of the most pressing and conflicted problems in China today. So my personal outlook is that Isaac has found a way to tell his own story, but that story is a little simplistic.

ART iT: You mentioned that your recent work is a satire, but in one sense satire can be just as superficial as something that is commercial or simplistic. What kind of relationship do your works have between surface and depth?

XZ: The relations are constantly changing. At times you are dealing with a relatively concrete issue of audience, at times you're dealing with a systemic issue, and sometimes that systemic issue is grounded in concrete reality, other times it's about the art system. For *MadeIn* right now, it's possible to turn all those issues into art; the distinction lies in whether there is any effectiveness to that. Our biggest concern right now is the question of how far we can take those issues. How can we express an idea, and why do we want to express it?

ART iT: Have your works changed much over the years? It seems like they could roughly be organized into three distinct periods.

XZ: There are big differences in all the works. The early works were mainly instinctual. The middle period works were also instinctual but at the same time had a kind of method informing their production. The installation and video about the Everest expedition, 8848-1.86, would be one such work. It started from a very small intuition and then became something that could relate to social issues like how we believe in "facts." Yet these works largely revolved around the content, and the method came

later. In contrast, what *MadeIn* represents is a method, and not content, although we can still insert content into the methodology.

ART iT: One of your last solo projects was the installation *The Starving of Sudan* (2008) at Beijing's Long March Space, where you used a live child to recreate the scene captured in photojournalist Kevin Carter's Pulitzer Prize-winning photo of a vulture stalking a starving Sudanese toddler. What was the motivation for that work?

XZ: This work actually anticipated the Middle Eastern Art series. They are both about making the audience use their own knowledge to produce a judgment. So at Long March the audience were in the same role as Kevin Carter. They went to the show, took out their cameras, shot pictures and I'm sure were very excited. Then afterwards they could pass judgment on me - "Oh, this artist is no good." And that parallels the fact that when Kevin Carter died, he was under a lot of pressure - condemned by the whole world; but the whole world does exactly the same thing that it condemns.

ART iT: As an artist do you have your own sense of ethics or morals?

XZ: I think I do. I have no idea where it is, but it should be somewhere. Ethics evolve along with your experiences, or as you gain more experience you discover new perspectives on the issues that you thought affected you. So it's like the Kevin Carter piece. People have to decide where they stand. Am I part of the audience? Do I identify with Kevin Carter? Am I looking at it from the perspective of the people in Sudan? Actually it's none of the above, but creating that kind of situation can prompt viewers to reflect on their own ethics. It's not about fundamental values, it's about questioning the nature of ethics, and I think this is the approach that suits me.

ART iT: Do you think that contemporary art has a function in Chinese society today?

XZ: Currently there is no place for contemporary art here, because in many ways it is still dependent upon developments in Europe and the US. But the emergence of the market, combined with increasing social problems, has helped to draw art and society closer. They are already closer than they were 10 years ago.

ART iT: What do you think is the possibility for the future of contemporary art in China?

XZ: I think it has a lot of potential. Otherwise I would stop making art.