

## A Reflective Turn in Exhibition-Making: On Alternatives to Ritual

Shanghai-based independent curator Biljana Ciric has a distinguished record of curatorial work that she calls, borrowing a phrase from curator Maria Lind, “context-sensitive.”<sup>1</sup> Before working independently, Ciric started her career inside an institution, the Shanghai Duolun Museum of Modern Art, where between 2004 and 2007 she was the director of the Curatorial Department, a position she considers to be formative for her curatorial practice.<sup>2</sup> Since leaving the museum, her engagement with institutional formats has remained a significant aspect of her work. This became clearly visible in 2011, when Ciric curated *Institution for the Future*—an exhibition conceived around artists from various Asian countries working with new institutional models—as part of the Asia Triennial Manchester. In the accompanying publication, Ciric cites curator Harald Szeemann’s *Museum of Obsessions* as the biggest inspiration for her current work as an independent curator.<sup>3</sup> Szeemann’s “museum” was not so much a museum, but, rather, a curatorial approach to exhibition making that he developed in 1973 and only ever existed in his own imagination.<sup>4</sup> For Ciric the fascination behind this approach lies in the idea of a museum in progress, something which is always becoming.<sup>5</sup> Similar to Szeemann, when approaching her work as independent curator, Ciric acts from the position of someone working for an imaginary art institution. She calls for exhibitions as experimental platforms with a strong curatorial vision that generate further questions and exhibitions.<sup>6</sup> Hers is an idealistic curatorial practice that attempts to take progressive routes—an open process she would like to find more readily in the operation of museums. According to her, “[the museums] need to abandon their rigid bureaucratic structure and start from a very honest question of what the institution could be and not be afraid to give a very subjective form to it.”<sup>7</sup>

Stemming from this belief, her recent exhibition and publication *Alternatives to Ritual* looks at the current crises in exhibition making and curatorial practice in China. Here, hundreds of museums are opening all across the country, but Ciric sees most of them “turning into empty boxes without any curatorial vision or distinctive voice, instead aiming for entertainment spectacle.”<sup>8</sup> To circumvent this direction, she initiated an alternative exhibition project that provided possibilities for experimentation and reflection. This text will demonstrate how *Alternatives to Ritual* proposed to reconstruct the relationships among artist, institution, and curator and looked at individual artistic practices in reconsidering and reconfiguring the rituals of exhibition making in China.

## The Artists' Museum

The exhibition *Alternatives to Ritual*, initiated by Ciric in September 2012, was a six-month-long undertaking<sup>9</sup> in which she collaborated with the Goethe-Institut in Shanghai. With this exhibition, Ciric infiltrated the office spaces of the Department for Culture and Education of the General Consulate of the Federal Republic of Germany in Shanghai with a group show, and additionally set up an exhibition space in its former screening room. This second space, now called the Goethe Open Space, held a series of temporary solo shows by the artists who were also part of the group show on view in the offices. Not only did Ciric create an exceptional exhibition setting, she also chose a point of departure that was directly connected to the sort of questions she wanted to tackle. For the ongoing group show in the office spaces, she was inspired by Szeemann's *Artists' Museum* presented as part of *documenta 5* in 1972. More specifically, she referred to a section within *documenta* that was as an early attempt to incorporate a discussion of institutional critique into a museum setting. Ciric invited six artists to each present their own *Artists' Museum* in the office section of *Alternatives to Ritual*. Hu Xiangqian,<sup>10</sup> Gao Mingyan, Hu Yun, Li Ran, Song Ta, and Lu Pingyuan are all Chinese artists from a younger generation, born in the 1980s, who, in Ciric's words, "attempt to resist the machinery of art systems and provide new models of working within it as a form of critique."<sup>11</sup>



While the exhibition took place in a working office, some artists intervened directly into this setting by creating site-specific pieces. For *Dr. Claus Heimes's Museum* (2012), Hu Yun reconnoitered the office of the director of the Goethe-Institut. The artist chose certain objects from his office, like an adjustable office chair, a plant on a small round table, a short plastic ruler, a Chinese-style porcelain mug, and two film archive cabinets, which he labeled as though they were artworks.



Besides the titles, like *An Unkown Plant* or *The wall which you could see through*, that, due to their particular descriptiveness could trigger one's imagination, Hu Yun added to each item a personal description written by Dr. Heimes that revealed the

significance or non-significance of these objects for him and created a witty comment on what might be considered a generic office space.

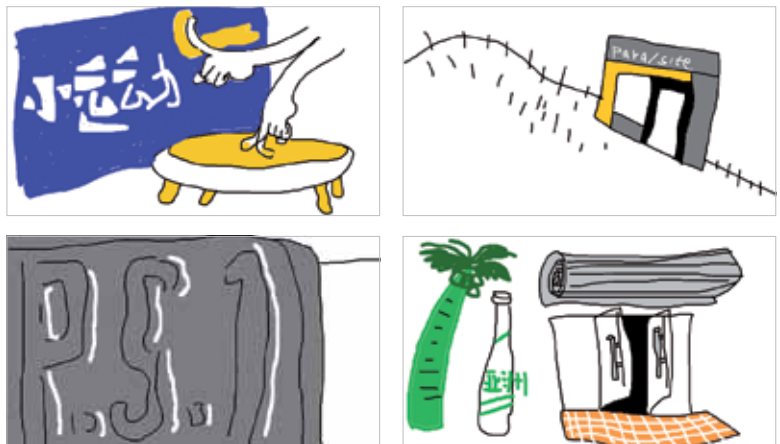
Song Ta used basic computer drawings to depict, in a decidedly subjective way, art institutions, museums, not-for-profit spaces, biennials, and commercial galleries that he is aware of in China and abroad. His images

Hu Yun, *Dr. Claus Heimes Museum, My Favorite Pieces in A History of Western Art*, 2012, book, label. Courtesy of the artist and the Department of Culture and Education of the Federal Republic of Germany, Shanghai.

Hu Yun, *Dr. Claus Heimes Museum, An Unknown Plant*, 2012, plant, label. Courtesy of the artist and the Department of Culture and Education of the Federal Republic of Germany, Shanghai.



Song Ta, *Artists' Museum*, 2012, computer drawings. Courtesy of the artist and the Department of Culture and Education of the Federal Republic of Germany, Shanghai.



often showed building silhouettes that, in their reduced form, appeared above all as fragments from his memory. In analyzing this artist's portrait of the art system, it was easy to understand how fragmented and limited his view is, as the project featured European and North American institutions primarily, along with some local institutions and galleries, but the rest of the world was absent, mirroring, according to Ciric, "the knowledge and information availability of contemporary art in China for most of the artists."<sup>12</sup>

Another highly imaginary piece is *Xiangqian Art Museum* (2010–ongoing), by Hu Xiangqian. In this project, the artist uses his own body movements and verbalizations to visualize a museum's collection he has assembled in his mind—a series of artworks, some of which do exist in reality, others of which are invented, challenging the value system of established art museums. For *Alternatives to Ritual*, Hu Xiangqian showed a new version of his museum. This time actors as well as employees of the Department for Culture and Education were asked to perform the artworks in his collection according to a script. Hu Xiangqian's proposal, Ciric writes, can be understood as "very utopian but at the same time a strong critique of art institutions today in China's context."<sup>13</sup>



Hu Xiangqian, *Xiangqian Art Museum*, 2010–ongoing, performance. Courtesy of the artist and the Department of Culture and Education of the Federal Republic of Germany, Shanghai.

### Exhibition as a Medium in China<sup>14</sup>

Biljana Ciric's essay "Re-establishing Relationships through Exhibition Making," published in the exhibition catalogue she edited for *Alternatives to Ritual*—a rich documentation of the project with additional discursive texts by local critics and curators who work in similar directions—outlines the difficult situation of the art system in China and asks how curators can bring changes to this "crisis of exhibition making."<sup>15</sup> For Ciric, the problem starts with a fundamental lack within curatorial practice and its discourse: "Exhibition making in today's [Chinese] art system has been taken as a dead format that merely cultivates material objects. . . . Interest in other aspects of exhibition making . . . has rarely been taken into account."<sup>16</sup> She gives a short overview of the emergence of the curator from the 1980s until today, arguing that the curator in China still holds a marginal role "when it comes to providing a clear direction for an institution's programming; his/her role is more as the coordinator of exhibitions hosted by institutions."<sup>17</sup> She names only the Guangdong Times Museum in Guangzhou and OCT Contemporary Art Terminal in Shenzhen as museums "where curating means something in its own right."<sup>18</sup> The other problematic issue, she contends, is that this museum system was established with "protocols on a so called Western model, though with Chinese characteristics."<sup>19</sup> This system accepted the role of the state in contemporary art in the early 2000s and is strongly driven by the commercial value of art, while non-profit art institutions are almost non-existent. What is especially symptomatic of the situation in China is that "the art market is on top of the art system, which changes the focus and the inner dynamics of the field significantly."<sup>20</sup> In this market driven milieu, institutions are often indifferent to the actual practice of curating.

In stark contrast, Ciric works with strong curatorial concepts and asks for a reflective turn in exhibition making. Her approach can be seen as a proposal for a discursive curatorial practice dealing with art institutions in a way similar to what Andrea Fraser proposes in her famous 2005 essay "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique."<sup>21</sup> Therein, Fraser argues for the importance of creating critical institutions, what she terms "an institution of critique," established through self-questioning and

self-reflection. In addition to this self-reflective mode, which is significant for the artists Ciric works with, her research-based process is vital in establishing productive relationships with the artists as well as with the institutions with which she collaborates. Unfortunately, the idea of the curator as researcher who has a long-lasting, open dialogue with artists has little grounding within the Chinese art system. In China, artists and curators are much more likely to be regarded as opponents, as Nikita Yingqian Cai, curator of Guangdong Times Museum, states: “The binary expression ‘artist-curator’ is associated more with direct contradiction between the two parties. . . . [A]n exhibition would not be regarded as a platform for knowledge exchange, but as a kind of power game.”<sup>22</sup>

Li Ran, *I want to talk to you, but not all of you*, 2012, installation. Courtesy of the artist and the Department of Culture and Education of the Federal Republic of Germany, Shanghai.



### The Artist-Curator Relationship

The basis for Li Ran’s solo work in the Goethe Open Space, *I want to talk to you, but not to all of you*, is a dialogue between artist and curator. Using a voice-dubbing strategy, the artist created a video that presented a conversation between himself and Ciric, the curator, in which he takes the role of a hallucinating patient and Ciric plays the doctor who tries to cure him. She offers medical advice and scientific explanation but fails to see the ghosts he is talking about. While the patient’s consultation addressed the issue of potential misunderstandings between artist and curator on a metaphorical level, it was even more telling to listen to the original, non-fiction, conversation between the artist and Ciric which was also made available as part of the piece.<sup>23</sup>

The point of departure for their original discussion (the doctor and patient version being highly fictionalized) was a series of photographs presented within the aforementioned Artists’ Museum—the part of Alternatives to Ritual that took place in the office spaces. The images document gatherings with friends by showing random details like people’s hands or snacks on a table. Without contextualization they remain somewhat opaque for the viewer, while for Li Ran they hold the ability to bring back memories about debates he had with artist friends about art and the art system.<sup>24</sup> One of the topics discussed in the non-dubbed video version was the notion of “curator as creator,” a definition Li Ran said he sees in Ciric’s work for Alternatives to Ritual, where she, in his view, created a context for artists by presenting a selection of archival materials and documents<sup>25</sup> from Szeemann’s Artists’ Museum and “[gave] the artists something that can be uttered, described, and followed.”<sup>26</sup> While some artists remain skeptical of a creative approach to exhibition making, Li Ran was interested in discussing Ciric’s thoughts in their videotaped conversation. But during the discussion it became clear that Li Ran felt misunderstood as an artist, which made him think “that almost

only artists can understand each other.”<sup>27</sup> To avoid this in further discussions, he decided to become picky when talking about his art—hence his choice for the title of his work, *I want to talk to you, but not to all of you*. Nevertheless, he did want to be understood, but couldn’t overcome his own doubts about most people’s ability to do so.<sup>28</sup> For Ciric “the failure of gaining mutual understanding runs through the work and reflects the system [they both] operate in,”<sup>29</sup> which this experimental piece allowed to surface.

### The Artist Within Society

Like Li Ran, Gao Mingyan addressed a personal concern and investigated his role as an artist in society. The starting point for his solo work, titled *What Else Can I Do?*, was his private situation. Shortly before the exhibition, he shut down his studio since he no longer had funding to pay rent on it. For that reason, he piled up his belongings neatly at the entrance to the white cube of the Goethe Open Space, using it as temporary storage. Close to this wall-like sculpture, in a video called *Self-Introduction* (2012), he talks in a confessional mode about his current circumstances, while in the background workers can be seen moving away his possessions. After giving up his workspace, he claims the city as his studio and remembers how, several years ago, he made another unconventional move in this direction when he played golf on Shanghai’s streets as an “opportunity to have an intimate date with the city . . . [he] lived in.”<sup>30</sup> Gao Mingyan speaks about his hope to integrate his art into society, to truly make a contribution to society. In his view, the self-centredness of some of his peers has allowed them to disconnect from the world they live in. While he reflects on what artists should not be, he does not tell what art’s contribution to society can be. In her exhibition catalogue essay about Gao Mingyan, Xiaoyu Weng proposes that perhaps giving answers was not his intention in the first place. For her, the key of Gao Mingyan’s project “does not lie in the ‘what’ but in the process of how he brings up this question and his reflections on ‘possibilities.’”<sup>31</sup>

The main part of his exhibition consisted of several video works in which Gao Mingyan paired physical exercises with comments and questions he picked up during job interviews. For instance, he does push-ups and claims “there is no freedom here, not to mention ideals,” and he asks, while doing pull-ups, “How can you make a living through art?” In the videos he repeats these phrases in a mantra-like way while exercising until physically exhausted. For Xiaoyu Weng, the “literal meaning of these phrases extends to outline the reality of contemporary Chinese society.”<sup>32</sup> Moreover, she sees the conflicting relation between the negative content of the phrases and the artist’s strenuous actions as constituting a metaphor for “probing into the possibility of confronting the social reality through an individual’s body and will, . . . to confront a mode of universal social value system shaped against the background of neoliberalism.”<sup>33</sup>

### Playing with Expectations

While Li Ran and Gao Mingyan both hinted at their vulnerability as artists, Lu Pingyuan’s solo show played it cool. Lu Pingyuan turned the exhibition space into a walk-in laundromat: Clothes from the artist were hung to dry, but during the opening hours a washing machine was constantly running,



Gao Mingyan, *What Else Can I Do?*, 2012, video installation. Courtesy of the artist and the Department of Culture and Education of the Federal Republic of Germany, Shanghai.



Left: Lu Pingyuan, *Waiting for an Artist*, 2013, installation. Courtesy of the artist and the Department of Culture and Education of the Federal Republic of Germany, Shanghai.



Right: Lu Pingyuan, *Waiting for an Artist*, 2013, installation. Courtesy of the artist and the Department of Culture and Education of the Federal Republic of Germany, Shanghai.

making sure the displayed garments would be kept wet at all times. The artist hired two people to be in charge of this process. During the breaks, they could be spotted seemingly waiting for something or someone—considering the title of the show, *Waiting for an Artist*, this might have been the artist. It was difficult to attribute meaning to this scenario, but the poster advertising the exhibition helped provide some direction. It shows a shark, a predator with a reputation for attacking people. Does the shark represent the increasingly commercialized art system that is only interested in consumption, waiting for its prey, the artist? This seems somewhat far-fetched, but Ciric's own interpretation points in this direction. In her reading of the artwork, “[it] not only reflects the individual anxiety of Lu Pingyuan but also a common concern that is rarely acknowledged publicly, where the artist is consumed by the system without any resisting strategy.”<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to address the negative effects of the pressure on artists by an art system dominated by market forces, and Lu Pingyuan's installation does this to a certain extent. But Ciric herself seems critical of Lu Pingyuan's approach. She points out that he very much focuses on revealing conditions within the art system through his practice, but Ciric would like to see “how he will continue to work within the system, but resist its protocols.”<sup>35</sup> With its flamboyant and repetitive mise-en-scène, *Waiting for an Artist* does not really resist the art system's protocols but oscillates between laying bare the system's demands and actually fulfilling them.

### A New Sense of History

Leading into the history of how the rituals of museums came into being, Ciric and two other curators, Alex Hodby and Seng Yu Jin, initiated a research project called *Art Worlds in the Making: From Utopia to Reality*.<sup>36</sup> Taking the visual form of a timeline, this project was displayed at the entrance of Goethe Open Space and is a work in progress. It particularly

focuses on events, exhibitions, publications, and activities that form connections and intersections with new institutional forms, exhibition models, and art-critical practices since the sixteenth century. While this timeline might be perceived as an aside to the overall approach of *Alternatives to Ritual*, it in fact contributes another important aspect—that awareness of history and of the complexity of contemporaneity is a crucial step toward overcoming the narrow conception of curating as solely preoccupied with contemporary art.<sup>37</sup>



Hu Yun is also concerned with the question “How to relate to the past?” He proposed reconnecting to points in history—an interest that has more to do with a re-evaluation of the fundamentals of the present than with nostalgia. In *Our Ancestors* he combined fragments of personal history with those of historical

Hu Yun, *Our Ancestors*, 2012, installation. Courtesy of the artist and the Department of Culture and Education of the Federal Republic of Germany, Shanghai.

events through the histories of two men, each standing in for a particular period in time, here looking at modernity and the way it came into being in China. In the first part of his installation he refers to the entrepreneur, educator, and politician Zhang Jian (Chang Chien), who founded the first public museum in Nantong in 1905. Embedded in the floor in Goethe Open Space is a gentleman’s hat, a pair of glasses, a folding fan, and two metal boxes. Using Berlin’s *Bibliothek* (1955) by Micha Ullmann—a memorial marking the Nazi book burnings—as a reference, the glass-covered underground space serves as a simulated burial chamber for Zhang Jian. Similar objects were found in Zhang Jian’s grave when it was opened during the Cultural Revolution.



In an adjacent room a collection of ten photographs was shown, displaying only their reverse sides, with year and place noted in handwriting. These personal images belong to Hu Yun’s grandfather, who was part of the generation that

Hu Yun, *Everything is Possible in the Darkness*, 2012, photographs, wall lamps. Courtesy of the artist and the Department of Culture and Education of the Federal Republic of Germany, Shanghai.

followed Zhang Jian. The chosen photos stand in for ten different phases in his grandfather’s life but can also be linked to certain epochs in the nation’s history, like the end of the Qing dynasty, or the second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). Through the anonymity of the reversed photographs, Hu Yun’s grandfather becomes a representative of his generation. As in the other solo shows, the question of self-positioning also arises—Hu Yun found it difficult to take up a position for himself in the historical contexts he created.<sup>38</sup> He therefore chose to display an image of himself that was projected at a specific point on every visitor who stepped into the installation; the rest of the time, his image remained invisible. In this way, the artist became a ghostly presence within his own installation. Through his research into the individual history of two men and the chosen modes of display, Hu Yun’s piece brought to the surface an idiosyncratic reading of China’s history.



Hu Yun, *Everything is Possible in the Darkness*, 2012, photographs, wall lamps. Courtesy of the artist and the Department of Culture and Education of the Federal Republic of Germany, Shanghai.



Hu Yun, *Untitled*, 2012, slide projector, colour slide transparency. Courtesy of the artist and the Department of Culture and Education of the Federal Republic of Germany, Shanghai.



## Rethinking Exhibition Rituals

Alternatives to Ritual allowed for the emergence of a critical discourse about curating and proposed an alternative approach to current rituals of exhibition making in China. Looking at the exhibition as a medium in itself, it explored medium-specific topics through five solo shows in the Goethe Open Space and six contributions to the ongoing group show of the Artists' Museum. In the centre of this project stood relationships (between institution, curator, artist, art system, society, modernity and contemporaneity), which were questioned, looked upon and negotiated, and that, along with the publication *Ciric* edited in conjunction with the exhibition made for a complex contribution to an otherwise often “over-simplified

understanding of curatorial practice”<sup>39</sup> in China. As a future outcome of her project, Ciric hopes to find more attempts in artistic production to “resist the machinery of art systems and provide new models of working within it as a form of critique.”<sup>40</sup> She would like to see the attempts of the artists that she presented in the exhibition as “possible activators, opening more constructive encounters within the field of art.”<sup>41</sup> Moreover, she is adamant that this artistic approach does not become just another short lived trend; rather, she calls for “serious exploration of the constrictions of contemporary art, reflecting on its past”, which for her is “an important base for the further repositioning of artists, locally and globally, in the future.”<sup>42</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Returning to these questions over and over again has shaped my curatorial practice, which I would more or less describe, borrowing Maria Lind’s words, as context-sensitive.” Biljana Ciric, “Curating as Intervention,” *Leap* 18 (May 10, 2013), <http://leapleapleap.com/2013/05/curating-as-intervention-biljana-ciric/>.

<sup>2</sup> “In 2004, I joined Shanghai Duolun MoMA, which was my first encounter with a state-funded institution in China. During 2004 to 2007, Duolun MoMA’s focus was embedded in the local art

context, in the Shanghai-based artists community, which was exploring new formats for exhibition-making. Running the curatorial department and being part of a team was one of the most important experiences for my understanding of “the institution.” It has been of great importance to my work as an independent curator, and to my thinking about the innovative institutional models that could have relevance in the local context.” Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> From an ongoing e-mail conversation between Tino Sehgal and Biljana Ciric, in Biljana Ciric and Sally Lai, eds., *Institution for the Future* (Manchester: Chinese Art Centre, 2012), 25.

<sup>4</sup> See Harald Szeemann, *Museum der Obsessionen: von, über, zu, mit Harald Szeemann* (Berlin: Merve, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> Paraphrased by the author: Skype conversation with Biljana Ciric, May 27, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> From an ongoing e-mail conversation between Tino Sehgal and Biljana Ciric, in Ciric and Lai, eds., *Institution for the Future*, 25.

<sup>8</sup> Biljana Ciric, “Curating as Intervention.” <http://leapleapleap.com/2013/05/curating-as-intervention-biljana-ciric/>.

<sup>9</sup> Alternatives to Ritual, Goethe Open Space, Shanghai, presented by the Department for Culture and Education (DCAE) of the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Shanghai, September 30, 2012–March 31, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Hu Xiangqian was the only artist not to have a solo exhibition at Goethe Open Space.

<sup>11</sup> Biljana Ciric, “Re-establishing Relationships through Exhibition Making,” in Biljana Ciric, ed., *Alternatives to Ritual: Exhibition as a Medium in China* (Shanghai: Department for Culture and Education [DCAE] of the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany, and Manchester: Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art, 2013), 12.

<sup>12</sup> Biljana Ciric, “The Goethe Open Space I Drew,” in Ciric, ed., *Alternatives to Ritual*, 256.

<sup>13</sup> Ciric, “Re-establishing Relationships through Exhibition Making,” 10.

<sup>14</sup> “Exhibition as a Medium in China” is also the subtitle of the publication *Alternatives to Ritual*.

<sup>15</sup> Ciric, “Re-establishing Relationships through Exhibition Making,” 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>21</sup> See Andrea Fraser, “From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique,” *Artforum* 44, no. 1 (September 2005), 278–83.

<sup>22</sup> Nikita Yingqian Cai, “The Multiplicity of Solos in the Framework of an Exhibition,” in Ciric, ed., *Alternatives to Ritual*, 29.

<sup>23</sup> During the exhibition, the original conversation was made available on a small video monitor in the same space as the dubbed version and could be listened to with headsets. Scripts of both versions are reproduced in the publication *Alternatives to Ritual* (“Documentation of the conversation between Li Ran and Biljana Ciric,” in Ciric, ed., *Alternatives to Ritual*, 223–236).

<sup>24</sup> See “Documentation of the conversation between Li Ran and Biljana Ciric,” in Ciric, ed., *Alternatives to Ritual*, 223–236.

<sup>25</sup> “For the Artists’ Museum part of Alternatives to Ritual I borrowed archival material from documents, from the exhibition that Szeemann curated in 1972. The archival materials I used for my exhibition were mostly what I could find during my research in Kassel regarding his exhibition and especially the Artists’ Museum section (images of the works from the Artists’ Museum section, the catalog, certain letters, newspaper clips).” E-mail exchange between Biljana Ciric and the author, July 27, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> “Documentation of the conversation between Li Ran and Biljana Ciric,” 223.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>28</sup> See *ibid.*, 225.

<sup>29</sup> Biljana Ciric, “I Want to Talk to You, But Not All of You,” in Ciric, ed., *Alternatives to Ritual*, 210.

<sup>30</sup> Gao Mingyan, *Self-Introduction* (2012), script from the video in Ciric, ed., *Alternatives to Ritual*, 96.

<sup>31</sup> Xiaoyu Weng, “What Else Can I Do?” in Ciric, ed., *Alternatives to Ritual*, 67.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Biljana Ciric, “Waiting for an Artist,” in Ciric, ed., *Alternatives to Ritual*, 282.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> *Art Worlds in the Making: From Utopia to Reality* is a work-in-progress timeline that was initiated by Alexandra Hodby, Seng Yujin, and Biljana Ciric in 2012. This ongoing dialogue about significant events that shape the history of art was included as a foldout map in the publication *Alternatives to Ritual*.

<sup>37</sup> For this approach to curating, see in particular Terry Smith, “Curating Contemporaneity,” in Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2012), 141–175.

<sup>38</sup> Asked about his position within the piece, Hu Yun pointed out: “I found myself like a ghost, I am the generation after them, but I found a huge part missing between me and my grandfather, and between me and Zhang Jian.” E-mail exchange between Hu Yun and the author, May 23, 2014.

<sup>39</sup> Ciric, “Re-establishing Relationships through Exhibition Making,” 2.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.