

ASIA PROGRAM

## DASHANZI 大山子 (798) AND ITS PEKINESE AVATARS

**What are the challenges for the institutionalization of a cultural place in China in the context of globalization?**

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The integration of China to the WTO, in 2001, has deeply modified the cultural scene and its economy. In the context of a reflection on the development of a "soft power" (软实力 - *ruan shili*) - as a power of influence as Joseph S. Nye<sup>1</sup> defines it - with Chinese characteristics, culture has become a priority area for the leaders of Beijing. It is not only perceived as a possible source of job creation but as a "security issue" (国家文化安全 - *guojia wenhua anquan*). Globalization forces, cultural institutions become industries. It is not only their name that is brought to change but also a whole reflection that bears on the risks involved in the opening of China to global capitalism from an identity point of view. Therefore, "joining the world" (与国际接轨 - *yu guoji jiegui*), according to the formula, cannot undermine the sovereignty of China in the cultural field? This dilemma is at the very heart of the diplomacy this country is considering in its competition with the United States but also with Korea or Japan, whose image and power of seduction seem to have a much bigger impact in the world, Western at least.

With the exception of the Australian searcher Michael Keane's synthesis and survey of the Chinese cultural industries<sup>2</sup>, there are few studies devoted to the subject. The reason can be explained, first by the source's accessibility, even if first inventories have been established just as recently on related topics, it is true, and in the English language in particular<sup>3</sup>. Adhering to a liberal policy in a manner that remains authoritarian, however, the central government has managed to develop, as we will see, and in the cultural field, unprecedented entrepreneurial strategies. It is from this hybridity that a culture conceived in a logic of profitability is born, thus showing the possible convergence between political constraint and capitalistic expansion. Culture thought like an industry: this is a theoretical framework that was first offered to the thinkers of the Frankfurt School in the world of European-American societies and that it is a question of extending, in a critical step, to the Chinese reality. The following essay is the result of a synthesis of the pre-mentioned works and a participant observation conducted for several years, mainly in Beijing and more particularly in *Dashanzi* (798) with public institutions, artists and the market.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead : the Changing Nature of American Power*, New York, Basic Books, 1990

<sup>2</sup> Michael Keane, *Creative industries in China. Art, design and media*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2013

<sup>3</sup> Chris Devonshire-Ellis, Andy Scott et Sam Woolard (ed.), *Intellectual Property Rights in China*, Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg (second edition), 2011; Hardy Yong Xiang et Patricia Ann Walker (ed.), *China Cultural and Creative Industries. Reports 2013*, Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, 2014

This study is part of the continuity of thesis<sup>4</sup> and habilitation to conduct research (HDR)<sup>5</sup>, which we then submitted to a comparison with other cultural realities conducted as part of a seminar created during these last three years between the Ecole Normale Supérieure and the Faculty of Arts of the Catholic Institute of Paris<sup>6</sup>.

## THE DASHANZI (798): A CULTURAL LABORATORY

With the explosion of urban growth, China has experienced in a few decades unprecedented upheavals in its history: migratory flows<sup>7</sup> and exponential growth of cities (219 cities of more than one million inhabitants to be built by 2025<sup>8</sup>), digging every year more the social inequalities and the relations with the consumption, cultural in particular. To overcome these difficulties, potential sources of frustration and so political instability, culture has become a priority in terms of reforms. The "cultural system" (文化体制改革 - *wenhua tizhi gaige*), which at least formally belongs only to the domain of ideology, constitutes, since 2011, an economic challenge; the "cultural industries" (文化产业 - *wenhua chanye*) are recognized by the then Minister of Culture, Cai Wu, as "key industries" (支柱产业 - *zhizhu chanye*). Funding and managerial methods are then radically changed while the structures of these industries remain tightly controlled by the Party<sup>9</sup>. Hybrids, to speak the language of a researcher specialized in the sociology of the media, Haiqing Yu, these industries are both "non-liberal, anti-liberal and neo-liberal, alone"<sup>10</sup>. The complexity of these new configurations is part of the research expressed since 2010 by the Chinese government and its leaders to find just compromises to build, according to the current slogan, a "harmonious society" (和谐社会 - *hexie shehui*). Managing contradictions to ensure national cohesion is reflected in other leitmotifs that the authorities use extensively in official

<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Lincot, *La figure de l'artiste et le statut de son oeuvre en Chine contemporaine*, Paris, You- Feng, 2009

<sup>5</sup> Emmanuel Lincot, *Peinture et pouvoir en Chine (1979-2009) : une histoire culturelle*, Paris, You- Feng, 2010

<sup>6</sup>A book on the theme "Arts and powers: contemporary Chinese, Iranian and Indian worlds" published by the 'Classiques Garnier' under the co-direction of Emmanuel Lincot and Isabelle de Vendeuvre is currently being prepared.

<sup>7</sup>Chloé Froissart, *La Chine et ses migrants. La conquête d'une citoyenneté*. Préface de Jean-Philippe Béja, collection « Res Publica », Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013

<sup>8</sup>McKinsey (2009), *Preparing for China's urban billion* in: [www.mckinsey.com/Insights/MGI/Research/Urbanization/Preparing\\_for\\_urban\\_billion\\_in\\_China](http://www.mckinsey.com/Insights/MGI/Research/Urbanization/Preparing_for_urban_billion_in_China)

<sup>9</sup> Laikwan Pang, *Creativity and its Discontents: China's Creative Industries and Intellectual Property Rights Offenses*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012; Michael Keane, *China's New Creative Clusters: Governance, Human Capital and Investment*, London: Routledge, 2011

<sup>10</sup> Haiqing Yu, *Dwelling Narrowness : Chinese media and their disingenuous logic*. Continuum, 2011, 25 (1): 33-46

phraseology, such as the "Beijing Consensus"<sup>11</sup> (北京 模式 - *Beijing moshi*) or, more recently, the "Chinese dream"<sup>12</sup> (中国梦 - *Zhongguo meng*); expressions comparable to the polysemy of terms used by the administration and whose meanings are as diverse as their interpretation: "regulation" (统治 - *tongzhi*), "resolution" (决定 - *jueding*), "measures" (规定 - *guiding*), "principles" (规则 - *guize*). A constant pragmatism in the application of these directives emanating from the various decision-making centres can be summed up by a formula, widely used: "At the top there is politics, at the bottom of the ladder lies the strategy" (上有政策下有对策 - *Shang you zhengce xiayou duice*).

Cultural industries, as conceived by Beijing's power, designate film and theatre production, the media, publishing, libraries, tourism, etc. A galaxy managed by two institutions, the Ministry of Culture and the Central Department of propaganda.

These two institutions have considerable means of censorship based on a constant in their ideological choices: promote China and the prestige of its civilization against what the regime fears above all, an ideological contagion borrowed from the West. This fear is recurrent. Already, in the eighties, the Party vilified the "bourgeois liberalization" (资产阶级自由化 - *zichan jieji ziyouhua*) and the "spiritual pollution" (精神污染 *jingshen wuran*) from the West. The post Tiananmen (1989) comforted the regime in its choices to resist to the West by promoting a cultural innovation for its own youth and, more broadly, to seduce the rest of the world. Several experts, through a well-known television series - The Rise of Great Powers (大国崛起 - *Daguo jueqi*) - broadcast on CCTV (2006), pointed out that China's cultural influence at the international level remained weak<sup>13</sup>. One year later, while the very term of "soft power" (软实力 - *ruan shili*) incorporated Hu Jintao's official Chinese vocabulary, one of these experts, Hu Huilin declared: "To maintain cultural security in the context of globalization, the state must protect China's cultural resources, regulate the cultural market ... National cultural industries are encouraged to export their products to foreign markets and to preserve cultural security against the culture of the imperialist powers"<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>11</sup>Emmanuel Lincot et Barthélémy Courmont, Le consensus de Pékin, Monde Chinois Nouvelle Asie, n° 25, juin 2011.

<sup>12</sup>Emmanuel Lincot et Barthélémy Courmont, « A quoi rêvent les Chinois ? », Monde Chinois Nouvelle Asie, n° 41, avril-mai 2015.

<sup>13</sup>Ying Zhu, Two Billion Eyes : The Story of China Central Television, New York, Free Press, 2012

<sup>14</sup>Huilin Hu, Protecting China's national cultural security in face of the rapid development (在积极的发展中保障中国的国家文化安全 zai jiji de fazhan zhong baozhang zhongguo de guojia wenhua anquan). Cultural Industry Innovation and Development Academy, Shanghai, Jiaotong University, 2007

It is within the general framework of this reflection led by the power and its elites that *Dashanzi* (798) has become an important cultural laboratory. In a few words, remember that this old complex of weapons factories located in the north-east of the capital was built in the style of Bauhaus in the fifties with the help of East German architects. Place of national pride and model of the fulfilment of the working class, the Communist propaganda celebrated it as a paragon and many Party delegations visited it. The reform initiated by Deng Xiaoping in the eighties causes its decline and while the municipality seems to opt for the destruction of Dashanzi (798), a number of artists with prestigious names (Sui Jianguo 隋建国,, Huang Rui 黄锐, Gao brothers<sup>15</sup> 高氏兄弟...) settle in these industrial wastelands that were finally decided to rehabilitate, along the lines of the rehabilitation domain of the old worker districts of Duisbourg in Germany. Foreign galleries but also the Museum Center Guy Ullens as well as the publisher of "Time Zone 8 Book", Robert Bernell, settle there in their turn. It is in this same district that the CAFA (Central Academy of Fine Arts) is arranged<sup>16</sup>. This general trend has institutionalized places dedicated to art that have long been marginalized and are now integrated into new urban cultures<sup>17</sup>.

To this voluntarism, authorities respond to an idea that culture must be secured thanks to three criteria. Those criteria are: either because the cultural issue is identified from the angle of an existential threat for society (civilizing approach), either because it is a heritage in danger (defensive approach), either because of the opportunities of expansionism ("soft power" approach as a security tool).

## THE DILEMMA OF POWER AND THE PRINCIPLE OF INNOVATION

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But voluntarism is not everything. We must conquer souls. The most common references in terms of cultural promotion are the Great Wall, the Peking Opera, pandas, martial arts, the sports star Yao Ming or the actress Zhang Yang while international festivals reward first and above all independent filmmakers such as Jia Zhangke, Li Yang and Lou Ye<sup>18</sup>. This dilemma brings us back to the very specificity of an authoritarian regime that has neither renounced its censorship practises or to a form of capitalist

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<sup>15</sup> Florent Villard, *Critique de la vie quotidienne en Chine à l'aube du XXIe siècle avec les Gao Brothers*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Wu Hung, *Tui-Transfiguration: A Site Specific Exhibition at Beijing 798* in: *Making History, Time Zone 8 Book*, Beijing – Hong Kong, 2008, pp 185-199

<sup>17</sup> *Hermance de la Bastide, Art et phénomène de regroupement à Pékin* in: *Arts, propagandes et résistances en Chine – Mélanges 1* (dir° Emmanuel Lincot), Paris, You Feng, 2008, pp 38-46

<sup>18</sup> Li Minjiang, *China debates soft power*. *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 2: 287-308

opportunism. This second characteristic of China is denounced by a very large number of thinkers of the New Left post Marxist (Wang Shaoguang, Cui Zhiyuan, Hu Angang, Wang Hui ...), without they come to criticize, however, following the example of a Marcuse<sup>19</sup>, the process of alienation that is at the heart of the revolution such as the one known by the modern societies. However, the transformations of the economic system, involving the development of an “innovative nation” (创型新 国家 - *chuangxin xing guojia*) seems to be a credo<sup>20</sup>. In fact, the socio-cultural configuration put in place by the new urban settings, such as the Clusters – gigantic commercial malls, living and relaxing areas – have been conceived according to an interactive dynamic as a cultural innovation place whose first model is inspired by Japan<sup>21</sup>. And it is not the least paradox to note that this cultural economy allows China to deploy its own creativity in the field of design or even in the rehabilitation of a heritage dedicated to the exploitation of domestic tourism. Furthermore, this domain seems to be one of the most symptomatic of the role exercised by the cultural industries in contemporary China. If until a decade ago the level of tourism of the inner provinces of China stayed low, the first paid holidays, on the one hand, the media coverage of the potential of these regions, on the other hand, has changed the tendency. The State’s role in this domain is here preponderant. It creates jobs and promotes a heritage sometimes unknown. Thus, a middle-class housing millions of domestic tourists' visits and discovers its own country. Their number is much higher than the one of international tourists. The economic metamorphosis of China, its new rank in globalization, puts this country under the regards of observers who, now, cannot fail to notice the importance of Chinese domestic tourism. A symptomatic example of this tendency is *Dashanzi* (789). Place frequented fifteen years ago by happy and curious few, mostly foreigners, it has gradually opened up to the middle-class managers and has become one of the main places of culture *Main stream* and consumerism of cultural products within the capital<sup>22</sup>.

Considered as a means of investment sector, tourism has been thought as a tool of development in China since 1978<sup>23</sup>. Reinforcing the sense of a national unity thanks to the development of the interior tourism stays one of the government’s priorities. Many

<sup>19</sup>Herbert Marcuse, *L'Homme unidimensionnel. Études sur l'idéologie de la société industrielle*, Paris, Minuit, 1968

<sup>20</sup>Li Wuwei, *Creativity is Changing China*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2011

<sup>21</sup>Abe Asuka, *Inshô-Ha : diffusion et réception de l'école française dit 'impressionniste' au Japon entre 1945 et 1985* (PHD under the direction of Professor Pascal Ory), Université Paris I, thèse soutenue le 23 septembre 2013 (unpublished) ; Cléa Patin, *La fabrique de l'art au Japon. Portrait sociologique d'un marché de l'art*, Paris, CNRS éditions, 2016

<sup>22</sup>Marc Abélès, *Pékin 798*, Paris, Stock, 2011

<sup>23</sup>Benjamin Taunay, *Le tourisme intérieur chinois. Préface de Philippe Violier*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011

strategies are at work for this purpose. Revisiting the old travel books of famous Ming scholars, reproducing them in a new specialized literature, is one of them. Establishing "Landscaping and Historic Interest Areas of National Importance" (名胜- *mingsheng*) is another one of them. The most interesting example is, without a doubt, the one of the south-west region where number of touristic infrastructures have been created between Guilin, Guiyang, Kunming, Dali and Lijiang. A new leisure company was born there. Shopping centres and ancient heritage elements (Buddhist temples for example) have opened up to new forms of sociability. Taste of artifice and consumption hold an important place in the agenda of domestic tourists. Thus, the search for a restoration of the heritage in order to restore its authenticity is not a priority. What matters is to associate the historical qualities of a place with its recreational qualities. In the style of a Viollet-le-Duc during the nineteenth century, it is not rare for historical movements to be immersed in a reconstituted ensemble from scratch. Therefore, the Dali's city (province of Yunnan) can make us think, in its project, to the Carcassonne's one. This overestimation of a largely reinvented heritage responds to a logic of economy and identity at the same time. A touristic city must have large shopping centres and special shopping streets. Pedestrian streets surrounded by shops, restaurants and bars are entirely dedicated to the market behaviours. This is the "modern showcase" of the city allowing the tourists from the interior to re-appropriate these spaces that a population of international tourists only could attend until now, as we also remind through the example of *Dashanzi* (798). The whole question is to know how the social actors will adapt, and play on these institutional innovations. Among them, the artists are one of the more important to know the status and the evolution.

## THE "CULTURE" (文化 - *WENHUA*) AND ITS DIFFERENT MEANINGS

If we use the scheme proposed by Jean-Marie Schaeffer<sup>24</sup>, we can analyse the notion of "culture" according to a functional classification and distinguish at least five types in it:

1- *The materialist culture*: it is composed of all the physical productions developed by a community:

A- *The livelihood*: the artist, in China, is often a teacher, attached to a *danwei* (单位 - administrative entity), an Art School or others. It is only since the eighties that the artist improvises himself as a curator, publisher or a manager in the event.

<sup>24</sup> Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *La fin de l'exception humaine*, Paris, Gallimard, 2007

B- *Housing*: it is a gregarious and segregated habitat. The *guanxi* (关系) art<sup>25</sup> or the “social capital” to use a concept forged by Pierre Bourdieu are decisive<sup>26</sup>. Even if *Dashanzi* (798) has, during a long time, been a “squat” place for artists who are out of the ban, it is hardly the case today. The wealthiest has now moved further to the north, in *Caochangdi* (草场地).

C- *Communication channels/ tools of any sort (telephony/ numeric supports/ web)*: access to this new mode of communication, reception of major exhibitions of foreign artists (cf: Rauschenberg in 1985 in Beijing and then in Shanghai having a profound impact on the local artistic production<sup>27</sup>...).

D- *Works of art*: in China as in the West, what determines the dollar value of the contemporary work is not its rarity but the fact that it is duplicated and massively integrates the main circuits of art.

2- *The social culture*: It is, to cite Jean-Marie Schaeffer, “regulations resulting from social learning in the technical sense of the term: facts of social facilitation, emulation and mimicry”<sup>28</sup>. Chinese artists have a rich social activity that favours the art of relationships on a concentric mode: family, friends (of the same *laojia* 老家 – or “origin’s place), and foreigners near or farther away, sociability places that are also the Official journals or not<sup>29</sup>. They often enjoy important social capital. They are for many from a family of intellectuals.

3- *The institutional culture*: it can only be born of the base of a social culture. It can be translated in the case of the artists in China – mostly men – often by an academic learning. They are a job. They are polyvalent.

4- *The normative culture*: Howard Becker<sup>30</sup> defines it as an authority which exercises power. In China, this normative culture doesn’t ever translate by a direct questioning of it<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Stéphanie Balme, *Entre soi. L’élite du pouvoir dans la Chine contemporaine*, Paris, Fayard, 2004

<sup>26</sup> Hermance de La Bastide, *Art et phénomène de regroupement à Pékin dans : Emmanuel Lincot, Arts, propagandes et résistances en Chine*, Paris, You Feng, 2008

<sup>27</sup> Emmanuel Lincot, *Peinture et pouvoir en Chine (1979-2009) : une histoire culturelle*, Paris, You-Feng, 2010

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *op. cit.*, p. 276

<sup>29</sup> Anny Lazarus, *La critique d’art chinoise contemporaine. Textes et contexte*, Aix-Marseille Université, Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2017

<sup>30</sup> Howard Becker, *Outsiders*, A. M. Metailie, 1991

<sup>31</sup> François Jullien, *Le détour et l’accès. Stratégies du sens en Chine, et en Grèce*, Paris, Grasset, 1995



5- *The symbolic culture*: it refers to all of the dispositions, permitting for the intentional contents or the information on the interactive rituals, like the exhibitions where the art professionals meet each other to spread. They contribute to the definition of what is or nor artistic.

These professionals (collectors, galleries owners, artistic mediators...) appeared with the emergence of a new paradigm born with the reform and the trading system. In such a system, professions are fluid and precarious. It becomes hard to define the professionals and to count them. However, the state has not marginalized itself from these new circuits created between culture, art and market.

## CONSTRAINTS AND BYPASS LOGIC

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Far from being a force resistance to the politic domination, the market is, instead, a matrix of development, to the extent that the state-party is the initiator and the energizer of the market. The social field of art reveals itself here in the image of the other social fields in the politico-economic type configuration that China initiated<sup>32</sup>. Political monopoly and market are not opposed. On the contrary, they mutually reinforce each other and they articulate themselves in the production of specific landscapes of norms and constraints. In this context, art and culture are the same business as others. According to Wang Hongfeng<sup>33</sup>, author of a recent thesis on the interactions between the market and the artistic and cultural communities of Shanghai, the hegemony of the goods dubbed by the policy does not allow a real creativity. Doubly subjected to the market and to politics, art hardly finds an original impetus. The logics of economic and financial investment that affect individual actors, collectives and institutions of a diverse nature are not, in his view, conducive to the outbreak of the unpublished, or even, he says, when the art critic is a paid mercenary, like journalists, and most often corrupted<sup>34</sup>. To the political guardianship, art has been the guardian of mercantile and consumerist, and thus cannot break the normative shackles in which it continues to encyst. The interrelated between the official system and the market enters into a logic both speculative and identity on a mode both global and local. Global because even if cities like Chengdu, on the inside of the country, pretend now to compete the big

<sup>32</sup>Monique Selim, *Hommes et Femmes dans la production de la société civile à Canton (Chine)*. Collection Anthropologie critique, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2013

<sup>33</sup>Wang Hongfeng, *Etre artiste à Shanghai au début du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, entre institutions publiques et marché* (PHD under the direction of Professor Gilles Guiheux), Paris VII, thèse soutenue le 30 septembre 2014 (unpublished).

<sup>34</sup>Emmanuel Lincot et Barthélémy Courmont, *Média et pouvoir en Chine*, Monde chinois, n° 24, février 2011

cities on the coast or of the world by the presence of areas dedicated to artistic activities; mirroring by doing this the example of *Dashanzi* (798) or, more recently the Caochangdi one or the architectural complex constituting the “Red Brick Gallery”<sup>35</sup>, in Beijing, by welcoming the “Marcel Duchamp Prize” and video making artists or conceptualists as Kader Attia, Lafita Echakhch, Cyprien Gaillard, Dominique Gonzales-Foerster, Laurent Grasso, Mathieu Mercier, Julien Prévieux or Tatiana Trouvé. Local finally, because it is for China the opportunity of becoming a cultural and a very high technology strength, job creator.

So this about nuance the observations made by Wang Hongfeng who don't really take into account the great flexibility of the artists to adapt to expectations or logics of market sometimes opposed, at the cost of a versatility of practices that do not tires to surprise. This malleability a priori may sometimes be qualified of duplicity and even plagiarism. Thus, the body, medium of art or body art is an excellent example, because the Chinese artists seem to repeat, without ever quote them, the total artistic manifestation of the 50-60-70 artists in Europe and in the United States, who want to be performances of political questioning of the dominant order, entangling mechanisms of subjectivization and imposed buildings. In reality, it is only a device because these same artists convene in a gesture to easily identifiable codifications, a tradition which is in reality theirs, Taoist particularly<sup>36</sup>. Judged too subversives, we better understand in return that these practices are not encouraged or even taught by art institutions or demonstration places like *Dashanzi* (798)<sup>37</sup>. Moreover, artists also know how to mediatize the impact of their actions, always targeted and adapted to the expected public, in quantitative proportions that the western world cannot know and this through social networks. Their constant use and technological transformation (such as the passing of the replies Facebook and Amazon respectively under the name of Kaixin and Dangdang.com, etc.), permit to create logic of circumvention<sup>38</sup>, as well as a real creativity in the triple interface now establish between China, the diaspora and the world<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>35</sup>The Red Brick Gallery is also known as the Red Brick Art Museum. The wish of its founders is to have both a permanent collection of contemporary art and to create a space promoting international artists by hosting for example the "Marcel Duchamp Prize": <http://redbrickartmuseum.org/en/page/detail/c38h.html>

<sup>36</sup>Thomas J. Berghuis, *Performance Art in China*, Hong Kong, Timezone 8 Limited, 2006

<sup>37</sup>This is apparent from the reading of a recently defended doctoral thesis: Lei Peng, *L'Éducation artistique dans les politiques éducatives de la Chine contemporaine - Quelles raisons, quels rôles et quelles fonctions ?* (PHD under the direction of Professor Alain Kerlan), Ecole Doctorale EPIC - Université Lumière Lyon II, thèse soutenue le 4 juillet 2018 (unpublished).

<sup>38</sup>Séverine Arsène, *Internet et politique en Chine*, Paris, Karthala, 2011

<sup>39</sup>Mei-Shih Shu, *Visuality and identity. Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific*, Berkley, Berkley University of California Press, 2007

## A NEW CULTURAL REVOLUTION SERVING THE POWER<sup>40</sup>...

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Other domains of the creation have been conquered since then. Architecture first with the Pritzker Prize assigned, in 2012, to Wang Shu. This latter has launched a properly Chinese and modern architecture of which he is one of the most famous representatives with Ai Weiwei. It is partly thanks to the latter that the architectural conception of the north complex of *Dashanzi* (798) is born, i.e. *Caochangdi*<sup>41</sup>. With these networks, these exchange places, these institutionalizations is confirmed a tendency: this Chinese creation is marked either by the reject of an acculturation (borrowed by the West) – it sometimes translates into the form of a “reinvented tradition” to speak the language of Eric Hobsbawm<sup>42</sup> – either by the redefinition of the Europe and American norms. It gives place to configurations of a new type which are identified on the mode of a cultural nationalism, or which is linked to an observable phenomenon on the margins of the Chinese world, as in Hong Kong from where the extraordinary financial power of Adrian Cheng comes from. The latter is representative of the observable collusion between the art’s world, the international capitalism and the luxury industry. It is in the ancient British colony he founded, in 2010, the K11 Art Foundation (more commonly known as “KAF”) and commercial malls presenting not only luxurious international brand but also galleries dedicated to contemporary art. These places are sometimes associated with artists’ residences created in the hinterland, and in particular in Wuhan, in the Hubei’s province.

The range of this actor is based on very broad potentials. They extend from the luxury industry to the universe of arts and don’t seem to be conditioned by any social presupposition in the definition, very evasive, of the taste notion. The silver value sets the criteria of distinctions while new identity markers emerge for new postures and orientations. They are acquired through libertarian (although politically orthodox) practices or more diverse claims associating playfulness and speculative research. What to say? Chinese cultural scene has been *glocale* since more than thirty years. Such a neologism does not have its equivalent in the Chinese language. It refers, however, to the double capacity for creators of this country to invest on both global and local scene. It is naturally the same for the promoters (patrons, gallery owners, etc.). The State party, for now, intends to stay the great authorizing officer of this collective kinship. To the rest, this same State Party retains to the eye of the vast majority of the Chinese population a

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<sup>40</sup>Emmanuel Lincot, - « Un "rêve chinois" savamment diffusé ? », NECTART - Comprendre les mutations culturelles et numériques, n° 7, juin-juin 2018, pp. 81-87

<sup>41</sup>List of galleries that are present : <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caochangdi>

<sup>42</sup> Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1983

legitimacy whose mainspring is the national identity and cohesion. The shared representation of its power assures a sort of internal sense of security but also the prestige in the inside of China whose cultural industries and “Soft Power” seem to have given priority to the southern markets, in other words, emerging countries. This ambitious policy has in particular a name in the phraseology of communist power, the “Beijing consensus” (北京模式 - *Beijing moshi*)<sup>43</sup>. Opposed to any form of liberalism, it claims a political control and economic profitability logic of all the cultural industries in the name of a properly Chinese singularity and an authoritarian model opposing in the choices of its rhetoric to the West. Sign of the times: *Dashanzi* (798) became without a doubt in the fact, one of the less creative but most controlled places of the capital city. It opens, however, more and more galleries exposing traditional Chinese painting (washes, rollers, etc.) of “*Guo ha*” (国画) type.

This simple observation shows by the same occasion that *Dashanzi* (798) responds to a global objective. The one of seeing China’s influence and culture grow by putting on the front scene these traditional cultural characteristics. This “Soft Power” strategy became since 2007 and under the name of Hu Jintao a national priority. If the ideas of Joseph Nye generate a certain interest in China, “soft power” is the subject of a redefinition from the Chinese experts and leaders, so much that it is impossible to speak of “Chinese Soft Power”, the latter having different characteristics from the notion initially developed by Joseph Nye, and suggesting, thus, a true rebuilding of this last one<sup>44</sup>. The principal default this policy could be to not propose long-term vision and to do nothing more than advocates the support to the cultural initiatives in order to promote China, but without asking why. Along these lines, it would be more of a sort of “nation branding”<sup>45</sup> than a truly strategic policy, even if, since a few years, “soft power” is no longer considered as a permanent instrument allowing to access a status of great power, but as a way to make its great power status recognized<sup>46</sup>. From a purely sociologic point of view, China doesn’t escape to the same flaw as the western societies do in the fact that they are based on money, merchandise and value as means of power. What type of subjectivity are they producing in China? The internalization of constraints created by the capitalism

<sup>43</sup>Barthélémy Courmont et Emmanuel Lincot, *La Chine en défi*. Préface de Richard Baum, éditions Erick Bonnier, Paris, 2012

<sup>44</sup>Barthélémy Courmont, *Chine, la grande séduction*. Essai sur le Soft power chinois, Paris, Choiseul, 2009

<sup>45</sup>We mean by "nation branding" the highlighting of the characteristics - not to say qualities - of a country, in its tourism, culture or know-how. The "nation branding" is thus more a strategy of promotion than of seduction, since it is not necessarily accompanied by a political message or a desire to extend the capacity for influence, as allowed by the "soft power".

<sup>46</sup>Meng Honghua (2007). “An Evaluation of China’s Soft Power and Promotion Strategy”. In: Meng Honghua (dir.). *China’s Soft Power Strategy*. Zhejiang: Zhejiang Renmin Chubanshe, 2007

and the creation of a subject consumer under the form of a regressive dynamic as observed everywhere else Anselm Jappe<sup>47</sup> or in a much more nuanced way, in the arts domain, Christian Ruby<sup>48</sup>. This trend is, however, complicated in China by the censorship mechanism put in place by the authorities. Subject to a growing number of prohibitions, number of galleries – foreign or not – are forced to shorten or even renounce to their activities. It is understood that in this context of “*democrature*” which associates – as designated by this neologism – democracy consuming and real dictatorship that the citizen/spectator is limited to an alienating identification with regards of the exposed objects. In *Dashanzi* (798) like anywhere else in the Xi Jinping’s China, the critical exercise seems to have been purged of all public space.

Despite evolving tendencies of the Chinese society through a larger liberalization, the determination of the actual president to stop the reforms from being uncontrollable is real. It is expressed in particular in the cultural domain by an implacable censorship which systematically reminds to the order every artist considered as deviant. If this return to orthodoxy is recurrent in the Party’s history<sup>49</sup>, it is not less preoccupant in its capacity to deploy by the means of the technology the generalized surveillance and a set of standards of the society. From an ideological point of view, Marxism stays the Ariane thread of each reflection in both cultural and social sciences domains. Constitutional democracy, neoliberalism or democratic socialism convey, according to the state party erroneous values. As appropriately pointed out by François Bougon, “*This Marxism right in its boots have to succeed in its synthesis with the Chinese tradition illustrated by Confucius or Mencius, but also by Han Fei (dead in 233 before JC). This rehabilitation of the thought of the favourite Xi Jinping’s philosopher, designer of the legalism, who advocates the primacy of fear, strength and control to serve authority, has made certain person say that we witness the advent of a “new market of totalitarianism”, a totalitarianism adapted to the XXI<sup>e</sup> century – the price to pay for the “Chinese dream”*<sup>50</sup>. In other words: the possible return to Orwell but without an exclusive return to the Mao Zedong era. The proof is that the Confucianism, banned under the Cultural Revolution, is, in its interpretation the most authoritarian<sup>51</sup>, an essential reference not only for the regime but also for a very large scale of intellectuals favourable to the “conservative

<sup>47</sup>Anselm Jappe, *La société autophage. Capitalisme, démesure et autodestruction*, Paris, La Découverte, 2017

<sup>48</sup>Christian Ruby, *Spectateur et politique. D’une conception crépusculaire à une conception affirmative de la culture*, Bruxelles, La Lettre volée, 2015

<sup>49</sup>Chen Yan, *L’éveil de la Chine*, Paris, L’Aube, 2003

<sup>50</sup> François Bougon, *Dans la tête de Xi Jinping (résumé en quatrième de couverture)*, Paris, Actes Sud, 2017

<sup>51</sup>Anne Cheng, *Confucianisme, post-modernisme et valeurs asiatiques*, in : Yves Michaud (éd.), *Université de tous les savoirs*, vol. 6 : *Qu’est-ce que la culture ?*, Paris, Editions Odile Jacob, 2001, p. 80-90

revolution”<sup>52</sup> that Xi Jinping intends to lead. The rallying point between the state party and intellectuals is nationalism.

The Party is, since then, equipped of classical instruments of the political communication: language, culture, art and Medias, every means of persuasion are now used and projected on the national scene as on the international one. It is about promoting the “Chinese dream” (中国梦 - *zhongguo meng*), the political slogan of the actual Chinese leader, cement of the new nationalism, alternative to the American hegemony. These deployment choices of the Chinese culture respond to these precise economic objectives. The multimedia market and the cultural industries are, indeed, in full expansion<sup>53</sup>. These new needs have to register in the “One Belt One Road” project (OBOR - “*Yi dai yi lu*”, 一带一路, in Chinese) which is the most ambitious global strategy never led by China in its history. Some have already seen the nationalist affirmation of the Chinese power. It is surely if we consider that China evolve in a word deeply hostile towards it. A sign that does not deceive: the Islamic republic of Iran has open in *Dashanzi* (798) a cultural centre<sup>54</sup>. Symbolically situated in the antipodes of a restaurant welcoming cultural activities of the Israeli community living in the Chinese capital, it gives to the entire site an unprecedented character, the one of a theatricalization of rivalries and international cultural models while the Chinese authorities embody the role of the referee-spectator as to dominate better the game of which it becomes, every year more, an actress both real and redoubtable. To this observation is added another one: the willingness encouraged by the authorities to exalt an ecologic and harmonious urban heritage of which *Dashanzi* (798) would be an example by means of the advertising campaigns visible at the entrance of the site. There is here, maybe, the expression of a total and aestheticized speech which reminds the ideological drifts, studied by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe<sup>55</sup> or Eric Michaud<sup>56</sup>, which Germany and its intellectuals once knew. The abandon and even the repudiation of the Chinese Lights legs and of the modernity are without a doubt at the end of this journey. ■

<sup>52</sup>Emmanuel Lincot, Le pouvoir chinois face à de nouveaux défis », - Asia Focus (IRIS) n° 34 - juin 2017 : <http://www.iris-france.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ASIA-FOCUS-34.pdf>.

<sup>53</sup>Emmanuel Lincot, - « Les industries culturelles en Chine. Enjeux et perspectives », Monde Chinois Nouvelle Asie, n° 41, avril-mai 2015, pp. 56-63.

<sup>54</sup>See this video in Persian language: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gsd5eLQsTo>

<sup>55</sup>Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe et Jean-Luc Nancy Le Mythe nazi, L'Aube, 1991

<sup>56</sup>Eric Michaud, Un art de l'éternité: l'image et le temps du national-socialisme, Paris, Gallimard, 1996

*ASIA FOCUS #91*

**DASHANZI 大山子 (798) AND ITS PEKINESE AVATARS**

**What are the challenges for the institutionalization of a cultural place in China in the context of globalization?**

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