

城市中国

# 城市中国 67

MARS + MORE

URBAN WISDOM ADVANCING WITH CHINA

798与创意集聚之困

798 AND THE CREATIVE CLUSTER CONUNDRUM



**798  
and the  
Creative  
Cluster  
Conundrum**

**798与创意集聚之困**

2014年10月 第67期

RMB 25.00 HKD 60.00 EUR 15.00  
USD 20.00 GBP 12.00  
ISSN 1009-7163 CN11-4557/GO  
67 >  
9 771009 716056

# 798: BEYOND THE MYTH

By: Frances ARNOLD

Interviews: Neville MARS

+ Daan ROGGEVEEN

Research: Xinlin SONG

Translation: CHE Jieling +

ZHAO Min + YUAN Jing + LI Ni

Photos: WassinkLundgren

*"There are a lot of dodgy galleries in 798, but you see that they're not doing good business. It's not like seven or eight years ago when anyone could come here and make money. What happens is that the galleries that don't sell transform their business model to start selling art-related products to get some money back..."*

Abruptly debunking any ideals or ideologies surrounding 798's development is artist Ma Shuqing. One of the longest-staying artists here, Ma still lives and works in the same compact space inside 798's renowned 'tunnel' that he first moved into way back in 2002. Whitewashed walls offset his colorful abstract paintings, whilst tucked behind is a modest apartment, his bedroom accessed only by steep, decidedly precarious-looking steps. A jovial man, despite the best efforts of adorably distracting kittens and an altogether more startling exploding kettle, our interview with Ma is a pleasant and valuable one...

As stories go, that of 798's rising from the ashes, its solidarity and sheer *alternativeness* is stirring to say the least. Spanning ideology, villainy and hope, the legends that continue to swirl around 798 don't just appeal, they inspire. Commanding attention at every level – be it casual day-trippers and culture-seeking tourists; international media and millionaire collectors – even today, and despite an abundance of shoddiness, 798 retains its charm, albeit one that's far removed from its early days.

Boasting world-class institutions – think UCCA, Pace Gallery, Continua, et al – these quality offerings are nonetheless outnumbered by a proliferation of distinctly lesser art establishments. In turn, they stand alongside street sellers, cafés and low-levels shops, indiscriminate in their flogging of fridge magnets, postcards and 798-emblazoned key chains to all who enter the still gated community. Their shared presence is unique – neither high-end and exclusive, nor superficial and crude, the district's distinctive, precarious balance is the result of a similarly singular development.

798 – its 360° turnaround from a government-endorsed center of production for military equipment to a similarly sanctioned hub for *art* – breaks all the rules. However, the conventions it challenged, the battles it fought and the resolutions reached through the indisputable creativity and sincere efforts of a handful of key players nonetheless differ from those of popular discourse: the established narrative of 798. In anticipating what the future may – or should – hold for this most archetypal of creative clusters in China, these myths need debunking, or at least reasoned.

Something of a jewel in Beijing's, and indeed China's, creative crown, **there are strong ambitions for replicating 798 on a national scale**. An economic success story, it's also a figurehead for the country's so-called 'soft power'. In short, however misunderstood, 798's impact cannot be underestimated. Meanwhile, of course, China's much-touted urbanization continues apace. Increasingly, there is a not just a yearning for, but a *demonstrable requirement* for better accommodating of the creative industries – art included. With this in mind, 798's history cannot be overlooked.

To that end, in July 2014 the four of us – architects Daan Roggeveen and Neville Mars; researcher Vivian Song; and journalist Frances Arnold – spent an intense week in 798 with the aim of uncovering the facts of the district's founding, and debunking the myriad myths that surround.

They were stories with which we're all too familiar; perhaps you are too. The

056

Frances Arnold is a Shanghai-based writer, journalist and editor with a particular interest in architecture and art.

Xinlin Song is an urban researcher and producer. She studies at Goldsmiths, University of London.



057

Artist Ma Shuqing in his studio in 798  
马树青在798的工作室

populist tale unravels inside a grey, industrial factory in the overlooked fringes of a city better known for its government and law than creativity and vision, peopled by a lingering, dwindling staff of workers. A drab, colorless place past its prime and ripe for renewal, the district's legacy seemed set. Due to be razed, it was poised to become yet another ominously anonymous machine – a tech zone – were it not for the arrival of the tale's protagonists and liberators: the artists.

As plotlines go, it's already problematic. Suspending disbelief for a while longer, though, the narrative continues: following years of social and political outcast, the artists had finally found their sanctuary. Replacing the factories' former drone with a veritable creative whirlwind, the artists fast set about white-washing walls, opening windows and breathing new life into the space.

They arrived in their droves, we're told, making art for themselves, for each other and for everyone else. A creative commune, they'd meet for convivial dinners and drinks that stretched well into the night, punctuated by critical discourse, lively exchange and intellectual conversation. Sounds idyllic, no?

Every good story needs a bad guy. Cue property managers, Seven-Star Group. Shrewd middlemen who bridged the unlikely gap between the factories' newfound idealistic tenants and their altogether more industrial surroundings, the popular narrative of 798 presents them as money-grabbing and unrefined, caring only for profits. Callous and unsympathetic to the artists' humble means, so the legend goes, they continued to raise rents, devilishly counting their ill-gotten gains behind closed doors.

The next installment of the 798 legend sees a lesser evil – the government – similarly violate the commune's simple ideology of art for art's sake. Eying up the area's potential for attracting tourists to Beijing ahead of what would prove to be an international show stopper – the 2008 Olympic Games – they forced Seven-Star's reluctant hand. Finally, their tech zone was no longer viable; art was the group's future. To recoup earnings lost, they raised rents, evicted the district's most 'troublesome' artists and adopted an increasingly nondiscriminatory stance in issuing leases.

Artists being what they are, we're told, didn't give up so easily, and persevered regardless. By extension, their art, their studios, the entire place thus neatly encapsulated creativity in the face of repression, resistance and, ultimately, resurgence.

(A rather more cynical ending to the tale sees 798 suffocates underneath myriad souvenir shops and progressively more lackluster galleries. Fast-forward to present day and the district becomes reduced to a circus, a tourist attraction and a farce. Ouch.)

Already, the populist narrative, the accepted mythology of the place strays from a more standardized path of gentrification: that is, after artists move in for ideological motives and commerce takes over, the community disintegrates. On the contrary: although fragmented, 798's community is still there – older, more cynical perhaps and definitely, *definitely* richer – they're nonetheless in-situ, to some extent, at least.

One does not need to dig deep to debunk much of the romance surrounding 798's constructed narrative. Nonetheless, our inquiries were wide-reaching. They included American [Philip Tinari](#), now the director of UCCA and founding editor of art magazine LEAP. We also spoke to the district's longstanding figurehead and involuntary leader, [Huang Rui](#). A pioneer of China's contemporary art movement who needs little introduction, he was instrumental in founding the infamously thwarted Dashanzi International Art Festival, as well as 798's first gallery that's still there today, Beijing Tokyo Art Project.

Where [Huang Rui](#) led, others followed. They included photographer [Xu Yong](#), an early settler who was effectively booted out in an all-too public rental spat with Seven-Star Group in 2012. His contemporary [Ma Shuqing](#) stayed: smiling and kind, when he's not creating bright, abstract paintings and collages from his 798 studio, he befriends the district's growing army of stray cats. Feeding the two-legged hordes, meanwhile, is Texan [Robert Bernell](#). Perhaps the ultimate 'Old China Hand', he first moved to China in 1993, subsequently setting up an office for his now-defunct website [www.chinese-art.com](#) in the factories' once grease-spattered former Muslim cafeteria. For almost a decade from 2003, operations shifted to that

# 798超越神话

798有很多小画廊。七、八年前，任何人都可以来这里淘金；但如今，它们的经营状况似乎并不乐观。那些本不售卖物品的画廊正改变商业模式，开始销售一些与艺术相关的产品以收回一些成本。

艺术家[马树青](#)的故事向我们披露了那些关于798发展的理想。作为其中一个在此居住时间最长的艺术家，[马树青](#)早在2002年就搬了进来，至今仍然在798著名的紧致空间“隧道”生活、工作。它藏在一个破旧的公寓背后，通过一段陡峭、看起来岌岌可危的阶梯才能到达他的卧室，那里白色粉刷的墙壁衬托出他丰富多彩的抽象画。他是一个快活的人，尽管有时会出現令人分心的可爱小猫们和更令人吃惊的会爆炸的水壶，总体上我们对[马树青](#)的采访还是愉快而不虚此行的。

在798从灰烬中涅槃的故事中，至少它的团结和纯粹的独特性是令人鼓舞的。跨越意识形态和希望，一直围绕着798的传奇不仅引人入胜并且发人深省。无论是休闲一日游或追求文化体验的游客，还是国际媒体和富翁收藏家，798都在各个层面吸引着人们的注意力。即使到了今天，其内部机构质量参差、和其早期繁盛渐行渐远，798的魅力却犹然存在。

798拥有一些世界级的机构——比如尤伦斯当代艺术中心、佩斯画廊、常青画廊等，然而这些高质量的艺术场所在数量上已轻易被不断增长的低质量的艺术机构所超越。那些艺术机构矗立在街头小贩、咖啡馆和低级商业之中。对进入这个仍设立着门禁的社区的人来说，它们和大量冰箱贴，明信片 and 印着798Logo的钥匙链没有区别。它们的共生关系是特别的——既不高端奢华，也不粗制滥造，在近乎单一的发展过程下，该地区形成了一种独特而微妙的平衡。

798，经历从一个政府背书的军事装备生产中心到一个同样被认可的艺术中心的360°转变，打破了所有规则。然而，它所挑战的传统、经历的斗争以及通过关键人物无可置疑的创造力和真挚的努力所达成的决议，却与那些流传的、已知的798的叙述有所不同。为了预测这中国最原型的创意集群可能或应该的发展方向，这些传说需要被揭示，或至少被论述。

作为一颗在北京乃至中国创意产业皇冠上的明珠，[在全国范围内复制798模式具有很强的说服力](#)。这是一个在经济上成功的故事，也是一个国家所谓的“软实力”的象征。总之，不管怎么被误解，798的影响不容小觑。当然与此同时中国大力宣扬的城市化进程正继续加速。逐渐地，人们不仅渴望并且要求创意产业——包括艺术——拥有更好的容身之处。考虑到这一点，798的历史更不该被忽视。

为此，2014年7月我们一行四人：建筑师[Daan Roggeveen](#)和[Neville Mars](#)，研究员[宋昕霖](#)（[Vivian Song](#)）和记者[Frances Arnold](#)在798度过了紧张的一周，旨在找出关于这个地区创立的史实，并揭示与之相关的无数传说。

这些故事我们都太熟悉了，也许作为读者的你也有同感。最广为流传的一个故事在位于被忽视的城市边缘地区的某灰色工业厂房中展开，在那些地方，权力与政策总是高于创意与远见，而在那里工作的人们正缓慢地流失。它的黄金时代已经过去，这个单调无色的地方已准备好更新，这个地区的传统似乎已定型。即将被夷为平地的它，预示着将成为又一个无名的高新区，如果故事的主角和解放者——艺术家们没有到来的话。

这个情节的情节已然疑问重重，但故事还是紧接发展了：在做了多年社会和政治的弃儿之

文: [小弗](#)  
采访: [何新城](#) + [大安](#)  
调研: [宋昕霖](#)  
翻译: [车活龄](#) + [赵恣](#) + [袁菁](#) + [李霞](#)  
摄影: [鲁小本](#) & [泰斯](#)

[小弗](#)，自由撰稿人，现居上海，热衷于建筑与艺术领域。

[宋昕霖](#)，城市学者，现就读于伦敦大学金史密斯学院。

of book store, and since 2012, the space has served as a café, sushi restaurant and most of all, hub.

Finally, we spoke with **Beatrice Leanza**, director of Beijing Design Week for '13 and '14. A pioneer of the event's close collaboration with the historic Dashilar district, before that, she was a cornerstone of the city's second 'creative zone', Caochangdi, working alongside such luminaries as **Ai Wei Wei**, as well as the late **Frank Uytterhaegen** and **Hans van Dijk** at China Art Archives and Warehouse.

That few consensuses were reached despite the trip's span nonetheless pointed to several inescapable truths – or rather, debunkings – surrounding 798.

**Myth#1: Countless artists:** Although unequivocally artist-led, the initial influx of creatives to 798 has been exaggerated. Numbering just a few dozen, they were nonetheless a potent force.

**Myth#2: Struggling artists:** Regardless of their former status, a majority of the initial wave of artists who came to 798 got very rich, very quickly.

**Myth#3: High rents = No artists:** Although an increase in rents was objectionable to the district's makers and shapers, that didn't stop artists retaining leases at 798 for so-called 'secondary spaces.'

**Myth#4: Suppressed artists:** Since the district's confirmation as dedicated art zone, Seven-Star Group have not just been selective in their proffering of leases, they've actively sought the advice of **Huang Rui** in terms of reinvigorating 798.

What follows is a jigsaw of opinions, stances and stories, organized to reflect cornerstones in the development and progress of 798. Between them, they challenge assumptions, and most of all, set stories straight. Moreover, they mark a starting point from which 798 can begin a new era of progress, growth and change; all the while it will continue to exercise its established narratives, long-standing positioning and cultural sway to persuade a diversity of stakeholders to contribute to new creative clusters for China.

后, 艺术家们终于找到了他们的避难所。一场货真价实的创意旋风席卷了单调的工厂区, 艺术家们很快着手刷白墙壁, 打开窗户, 为空间注入新的生命。他们为了创作艺术, 为了彼此和所有人, 成群结队地到来。在这个富有创造性的公社, 他们常常开怀聚餐畅饮到深夜, 穿插着思辨的言论、热烈的交流和知性的对话。听起来很田园诗意, 不是吗?

每个好故事都会有一个“反派”。说的便是作为物业管理的七星集团。这是一家精明的中间商, 斡旋于新发现的理想租户及其工业环境之间, 他们对利益的无尽追求在798被广为流传。据说他们对艺术家的要求反应麻木, 并不断提高租金。798传说中下一个出场的角色是政府, 它并没有那么利益化, 但也同样侵及了公社的纯粹的艺术理念。在2008年的奥运会——一场后来被证明是国际展会高潮的盛会之前, 政府看中了该地区吸引游客前来北京的潜力, 便对不情愿的七星公司施以了压力。终于, 他们的“高新区”变得不再可行, “艺术”才是集团的未来。为了弥补收入损失, 他们提高租金, 驱逐出该区最“麻烦”的艺术家们, 并在签订租赁协议时采用了对租客越来越一视同仁的态度。

我们得知, 作为艺术家的他们也没有轻言放弃, 而是坚持了下来。他们的艺术, 工作室, 这个产生创造力的处所, 也因此经历了压抑、反抗和最终的复兴。

目前流行的叙述中, 大众所知的关于此地的故事来自于更脸谱化的城市更新的路子: 当艺术家为了精神上的动机入住、商业逐渐接管该地区后, 社区分裂了。事实上与之相反, 虽然支离破碎, 但798社区仍然存在——老了, 可能更悲观了, 也绝对更富有了——他们仍然还在, 至少在某种程度上。

我们不需掘地三尺就可以找到798历史叙述中的浪漫。不过, 我们的调查是非常广泛的, 被访者中包括美国的**田霏宇 (Philip Tinari)**, 他是尤伦斯当代艺术中心的前任馆长和艺术杂志LEAP的创始编辑。我们还采访了798长期的名誉领袖**黄锐**, 他是毋庸置疑的中国当代艺术运动的先锋, 带头创立了大山子国际艺术节以及798的第一个画廊——北京东京艺术工程, 该画廊到今天仍然存在。**黄锐**不乏拥趸者们。他们包括摄影师**徐勇**, 一个在与七星集团2012年的一次公开租赁骂战中驱逐出去的早期定居者; 与他同时代的**马树青**留下了: 他笑容可掬, 在不创作色彩明亮的抽象画和剪贴画时, 与小区日益壮大的流浪猫群交上了朋友。与此同时, 还有喂养流浪动物的Texan **Robert Bernell**。他可能是最顶级的“中国通”, 1993年就来到中国, 随后为网站www.chinese-art.com (现已不存在) 设立了办公室, 地点在工厂区曾经油脂四溢的前穆斯林餐厅。2003年起的近十年, 该地的营业业务变成了书店, 并自2012年起, 成为了一间咖啡厅、寿司餐厅, 最重要的是, 一个枢纽。

最后, 我们采访了**毕月 (Beatrice Leanza)**, 2013和2014年北京设计周的领导者, 与历史悠久的大栅栏地区密切合作的先驱。在此之前, 她是城市的第二个“创意区”草场地的基石人物, 与一些像**艾未未**、**Frank Uytterhaegen**和已故的**Hans Van Dijk**这样的大牌艺术家在中国艺术档案仓库一起工作。

调查中很少能达成共识, 但指向一些关于798无法回避的事实, 或更确切的说是误区。误区1: 无数的艺术家: 虽然明确艺术家为主导, 初始涌入798的创意者数量却被夸大了。具体人数只有几十个, 但他们仍是一股强大的力量。误区2: 挣扎的艺术家: 不论他们以前状态如何, 多数早期来到798的艺术家们都一夜暴富。误区3: 高租金=没有艺术家: 虽然片区的制定者和塑造者对增加租金是反感的, 这并不能阻止他们为了所谓的“第二空间”保留在798的租约。误区4: 被压制的艺术家: 由于该地区被确定为专门的艺术区, 七星集团不但有选择性地提供租赁, 还积极征求黄锐的意见以重振798片区。

以下是一些意见、立场和故事的拼图, 以反映798发展进程中的奠定事件。这些拼图质疑猜想, 更重要的是, 它们叙说事实。此外, 这还标志着——一个起点, 798可自此开始一个发展、成长和变化的新时代; 同时, 798将继续以其既定的叙事、长期的定位和文化冲击去说服各种各样的利益相关者, 为中国新的创意产业聚落作出贡献。



# COMMUNITIES/ CONNECTIONS

Pinpointing the precise nature of 798's founding community is all but impossible. Be it [Huang Rui](#)'s DIAF or [Robert Bernell](#)'s establishing of his since-closed book store, the first ventures of those early settlers happened within a concentrated timeframe of just a few critical months, lending the district a palpable intensity.

Once only loosely-connected, the links that bound 798's first handful of entrepreneurs and the two dozen or so artists who joined them fast became firm. United as much by the actuality of their shared experiences as the legends that continue to surround them, they recall a varied mosaic of stories, scenarios and impressions. Indeed, much of the passion that pushed the art zone onto stages public, critical and international is gone, replaced with bland galleries, a fragmented community and the inevitable souvenir shops. As a first step towards reigniting 798's energy both now and for the future, one must first understand the original appeal of the district; the shifting needs and expectations of those who contributed most to its development; and whether the historical roles they assumed could be relevant today.

798's complex history brings to light several recurring patterns and themes. Until only very recently, for example, the factories were mainstays of production: once of military equipment, and later of art. First envisioned back in 1951, 798 was international right from the get-go: even the site's iconic buildings marked collaboration between the then-fledgling PRC and East German architects. Originally built on shared ideologies that transcended borders – of proletarianism, that is – the factories' modern-day cause is similarly international: art, and the hosting of worldwide artistic talents. Considering these parallel histories of productivity and exchange – their controversies, secrecies and failures – the Dashanzi factories have served two functions especially well during their more than 60 years of utilization: building communities and forging connections.

This was never truer than during the early days of the art district's coming into being. Beginning in roughly 2001, 798 started to reluctantly shake off its industrial image, catching the attention of artists. Predominantly Chinese and headed-up by the likes of [Huang Rui](#) and [Xu Yong](#), they started to settle, transforming newly-vacated office and manufacturing spaces into bright, light studios. Foundations in place, a network of secondary figures were soon drawn to the area, selling services and lending skills to contribute to the bigger culture-making machine that was now quickening apace. They included 22-year-old [Philip Tinari](#), an American student with a keen interest in art and aptitude for translation; and [Robert Bernell](#), a website-owning Texan with a penchant for beautiful books. And so, a kind of grassroots ecology developed: artists attracted related industries that in turn drew in peripheral commerce.

It's a beginning that's been romanticized over the years to the extent that 798 has become as synonymous with solidarity and struggle as it has art. Why has the district's story been so idealized? How did 798 forge its reputation, and is it deserved? Even as a nascent art zone, it was hardly unique: already there was Yuan Ming Yuan and Songzhuang, for example. Just down the road from 798, Caochangdi was shaping its own niche as home to China Art Archives and Warehouse, and later to Three Shadows Gallery, ShanghaiART, Chambers Fine Art and more. Nonetheless, the celebrity, conflict and convenience of 798 quickly turned the district into the figurehead for contemporary Chinese art. Even today, the district maintains its function as the unofficial hub of a network of satellite districts, each of which has a role to play in continuing to feed, prop up and even counter 798's reputation.



Artist [Huang Rui](#) in his office, 798  
黄锐在798的工作室

# 社区共同体及联系

Much like those other art outposts, and regardless of 798's inextricable nostalgia, one thing's for sure: art underpinned everything. It enticed precisely the individuals through the zone's imposing gates who would soon connect, click and cooperate to become 798's core community. However, to suggest that this common denominator extended to a shared ideology, code or creed may be a romance too far. Indeed, for many what set 798 apart from other art districts in Beijing and beyond was its sheer pragmatism: simply put, its popularity stemmed from low rents, large spaces and most important of all, availability.

Significantly impeding the practicality and potential of the place, as far as those first tenants were concerned the factories had a shelf-life of just three years. After that time, renters were warned, the entire area was to be razed to make way for a technology zone, staff housing and related facilities. Of course, that particular fate was averted: 798 has retained a reputation for arts, albeit one that is somewhat removed from its early heydays – roughly between 2002 and 2004.

Did a concentration of artists, curators and writers trigger creativity and channel contemporary Chinese art for those few, critical years? Or were those early settlers simply seizing spaces on an individual basis, their proximity merely incidental? Was there any inclination of the implications such a clustering could have on artists' lives, friendships and careers?

Hindsight reveals the nature of 798's network and community to be useful ones that propelled careers, raised statuses and forged relationships. And regardless of the whos, the whats and the whys of the matter, that was a very good thing indeed for Chinese contemporary art.

Philip Tinari  
24 July / Timezone 8

*You first came to China on a Fulbright scholarship in 2001 – how did you find Beijing's contemporary art scene and what was your initial introduction to 798?*  
The first exhibition I went to in Beijing was a collection of sculptures by **Ai Wei Wei** for the very first SOHO development, so that dates me to a very specific moment! It was always that idea of art in an urban context.

I got know a curator called **Feng Boyi** over my first year here and would visit artists and shows with him. I remember calling him in August 2002 and saying, 'I'm not going to intern in a law firm this year, I want to do something in art, what can I do?' He invited me to meet him and artist **Sui Jianguo** the next day outside his office.

We got in his car and drove what felt like a very long route out to the fringes of the city and of course, it was to 798. The back story there is that **Sui** was really the first artist to have a studio here in '98 or '99, he was then the chair of the sculpture department at CAFA. He had designed a monument to the anti-Japanese war for *Lugou Qiao*, the Marco Polo Bridge outside of Beijing. It was a giant statue and he needed a big space to make it. The design had been approved by the government and he had to execute. That's how he first came here, to the space where Tang and Continua are now. Then it kind of snowballed.

In summer 2002 interesting things were happening because of **Huang Rui** who had just come back from Japan and brought with him the interest of this Tokyo gallery. It was basically one of these *Gutai* galleries right after the war, but the son of the guy who started it, **Tabata Yukihiro** had been in Beijing and saw the '89 show and had this deep interest in Chinese contemporary art.

And that was it. They'd asked **Feng Boyi** to curate the show, and I was 22 years old, I didn't really have anything to do. I just wanted to learn, so I sort of attached myself to him, translated the catalog and worked on the editing. That show opened October 12 2002... It was a landmark day for 798, because I think 1,000 people showed up at the opening.

*How did 798 develop after that first milestone exhibition, and what – or who – was the driving force behind its momentum?*  
I remember bringing **Erik Eckholm** here, he was the New York Times correspondent at the time. He got a story published in December 2002, I think that was the first foreign report on 798. Already then there was the whole subtext of real estate prices rising, of SOHO in Beijing, that whole narrative was

似乎没人能回答，谁才是798的最初创立者。从**黄锐**的DIAF到**罗伯特·伯纳尔**业已关闭的书店，第一波“闯入者”的冒险发生在短短几个月。而一旦这种松散的关系建立起来，这些最早的“主人”和接踵而至的二十多位艺术家由共同的经历与传奇紧密联结。他们对798的记忆仿如故事、情境片段串联的马赛克拼接。反观今日，那股将798推上国际舞台的激情已然消散，取而代之的是庸俗的画廊、支离破碎的社区以及乏善可陈的纪念品商店。重燃798的第一步需要去理解其最初的魅力，那些对798贡献青春者曾经的期待及其需求的转变，追问其历史角色与当下是否关联。

798是近些年艺术区发展模式的真实写照。工厂始终是一个生产的空间，曾经生产的是军事装备，现在则是艺术品。1951年的798从一开始就是国际化的，其标志性建筑是由当时羽翼未丰的中国建筑师与东德建筑师合作建造，那是跨越国境的共同意识形态——无产阶级联合。工厂的现代化源头是国际化的：艺术，以及集聚全世界的艺术生产。考虑到这些生产和交换的并行时空，围绕其上的争议、隐秘和失败，大山子工厂在其超过60年的岁月中，始终承担了两个功能：建造社区共同体和锻造联结。

建造共同体和锻造联结在798的始创阶段最为真实。大约2001年起，798开始被迫放弃其工业象征意义，转而吸引艺术家们的关注。以**黄锐**、**徐勇**为首的中国艺术家们开始在此处定居，将曾用于办公和生产的空间腾出转化为明亮的工作室。在此基础上，第二波入驻者蜂拥而至，他们出售服务，提供技能，为这台正在加速的巨大文化制造机器添了一把火。其中包括22岁的**田霏宇**，一个对艺术有浓厚兴趣并有翻译天赋的美国学生；还有**罗伯特·伯纳尔**，一个爱好书籍的texan网站拥有者。于是，一种原创的原生状态萌发：艺术家集聚带来了外围的产业发展。这是围绕798的浪漫传奇开始之处，多年以后，798不仅被视作艺术的同义词，更称为团结与奋斗的同义词。为什么一个艺术区的故事值得被如此理想化？798是如何获得这种声誉？即使作为一个新兴的艺术区，这里也是几乎独一无二的：例如之前已存在的圆明园和宋庄。只要从798开始沿路往下走，草场地正在塑造自己作为中国艺术文件仓库（CAAW）的地位，然后会到达三影堂画廊、香格纳画廊、前波画廊等等。尽管如此，798的声望、争议与活跃将这片地区迅速转变为“有名无实”的中国当代艺术区。然而，直到今日，这片地区依旧发挥着串联周边卫星区网络的非正式枢纽的功能，而这其中，每个片区都在哺育、支撑甚至冲击着798往日的荣光。

如同其他艺术先行者一样，剥离人们对798难以割离的怀旧之情，有一件事无法否认：艺术是所有一切的基础。正是艺术吸引到某些个体，并将这些个体联结成为798的核心群体。但，如果因为仅凭这些共同点就必然发展成共同的观念、规则乃至信仰未免过于天真。事实上，798之所以区别于北京其他艺术区，就在于其纯粹的“实用主义”：低租金、大空间，以及可利用性。正如那些早期住户所担心的那样，厂区只有三年的寿命，这对艺术实践和798的未来是极大阻碍。租户被告知，三年后这整个区域将被夷为平地，让位于一个集高新技术产业、职工住房和相关配套设施于一体的开发区。当然，798已幸免于难，成功保留其艺术文化属性，尽管与2002至2004年那段鼎盛时期相比，某种程度上，这种声望已然丧失。

*在最初的几年，艺术家、策展人和作家的聚集真的触发了创造力并引导了中国当代艺术的发展吗？又或者，他们的互相接近聚居只是一种偶然？这样的集聚可能对艺术家们的生活、友谊和艺术创作产生怎么样的影响倾向呢？*

事后反思，798的网络和社区共同体对于推进事业、提升状态和建立关系是非常有益的。且无论它究竟是什么、由谁创建以及为何产生，这对于中国当代艺术来说都确实是一件好事。

**田霏宇**  
7月24日/ 东八时区

already there... **Huang Rui** was the leader of the whole thing, the personality of 798. He pointed out all the German designs and talked about how he'd always wanted to work here.

After that there was a show the weekend right before SARS was admitted in Beijing and it was supposed to be called **'Reconstruction 798'. They coined this title but they clashed with the factory people who said you can't say you're rebuilding 798... it already exists!** So they had to go and tape over the number 798 on all the posters! That's partly why it was called the Dashanzi art district from '03 to '06. The 798 name didn't come back until the government got involved, reclaimed it and rebranded it, but there was this time when you just couldn't call it that. It was a very Chinese thing to happen.

*And what about the community of 798? Who was here back then and what were they doing?*

By spring of '03 there was a kind of tenants' association that would hold these meetings where people would come together, sit down and discuss problems and issues. It was a real mix of artists, people like **Robert**, a couple of galleries but not really very many yet, publisher **Hong Huang**... Then you had some magazines: obviously, the whole lifestyle and fashion media was developing immensely at the time; before they were in a very primitive spot. That fall, Beijing Biennale happened – it was the only good one, and there was all this offsite stuff happening here. In fact, in the UCCA space **Rong Rong** and **inri** had a show there, and there was a Sino-German show there called 'Left Hand/ Right Hand'.

*To what extent did the community drive the creativity of the place? Was there a sense of solidarity and exchange that somehow influenced content?*

The first interpretive framework you had for the cluster at least in terms of an art context is the whole history of art villages in China. Go back to Yuan Ming Yuan in the early '90s, the East Village in the mid '90s and all that extreme performance art, and then of course Songzhuang, a kind of marginalized artist community on the margins of the city. **The fundamental difference with 798 was that this was the first neo-liberal art district; the first to have foreign money from the very beginning**, be it Japanese or American interventions; and it was really the first one where people were here not out some shared artistic ideology, but because the space was nice, the rent was cheap, the more instrumental reasons that people generally cluster.

But at least at the beginning there was a critical mass of artists, and it did still feel like it stood for something, if only for art in the abstract. There was a squatter, settlement mentality of not wanting to let go. And of course, at that time there was a widely-held idea that it would all be torn down pretty quickly.

*But that didn't happen, of course. In what ways did the neutralizing of that threat – of the area being razed to make way for a tech zone – change 798's dynamic? Were there any concurrent factors at play?*

The future of 798 didn't really become clear until 2006 which was when the creative industries discourse had permeated government in China to the extent that you couldn't get rid of it, and also of course there was the Olympics... That whole period of '02 to '05 was bottom-up rather than top-down.

If there was a kind of grassroots artistic thing happening that was driven by artists for more pure, noncommercial reasons, and of course that collapsed very quickly. At the same time you had the rise of the Chinese art market. If you think about it, in '02, '03 and '04 there wasn't really a market yet, it was much closer to the '90s than it is to today. There weren't really collectors in China.

Part of it is government co-option; part of it is neo-liberal progression. Now we measure it in terms of quality – how many good galleries are there? So that's why things in '07 and '08 became so commercial. Part of it becoming commercial was actually one of the better trends...

*Let's start with when you first came to 798 – when was it, what did it look like, and what was the potential that you saw?*

In 2001 I was looking for an art studio. I looked at a few places but they were no good. It was a cold winter and none of the spaces I was looking at had a heater. The other factory studios I was looking at had no radiator at all. So I called **Ai Wei Wei** and he said 'come with me'. So, me, **Ai Wei Wei**, Ai's

*您第一次来到中国是由于2001年的富布赖特奖学金——您是如何看待当时北京的当代艺术氛围，当初您是如何被介绍到798的？*

在北京我去的第一个展览是为第一轮SOHO开发举办的艾未未的雕塑收藏展，因此那对我来说是个非常特别的日子！798就是一种城市语境下的艺术讨论。

我在这的第一年里认识了一个叫**冯博一**的策展人。我与他一起访问艺术家、出席演出。我记得我在2002年8月打电话给他，说：“我今年打算去律师事务所实习了，我想做些与艺术有关的事情，我该怎么办？”他让我第二天在他的办公室外与他（和艺术家**隋建国**）见面。

我们上了车，就记得开了很长一段路，最后来到城市的边缘地带，当然，这就是798。**隋建国**确实是1998或1999年第一批在这里建立工作室的艺术家之一，他当时是中央美术学院雕塑系的主任。他在卢沟桥——即马可波罗桥上为抗日战争设计了一座纪念碑。那是一座巨大的雕像，他需要一个很大的空间来制作它，该设计已经由政府批准。这是他当初来这里的原因——这是现在当代唐人艺术中心和常青画廊的所在地。

2002夏季，有趣的事情发生了，因为刚刚从日本回来的**黄锐**带来了东京画廊的兴趣。它其实是战后的这些具体派（GUTAI）画廊的其中之一，但其创始人的儿子，**田畑行仁**来北京看了89年的展览，并且对当代中国产生了浓厚的兴趣。

就是这样。他们让**冯博一**来当这场展览的策展人，当时我才22岁，其实没什么能做的。我只是想学习，所以我就跟着他，翻译目录并做一些编辑工作。展览在2002年10月12日开幕……（它是）对于798来说具有标志性的一天，因为我估计约有1000人出席了开幕式。

*在这具有里程碑意义的展览之后，798是如何发展的？或者是什么——或者谁是它背后的驱动力？*

我记得我将**埃里克·艾克霍姆**带来这里，当时（他是）纽约时报驻北京的记者。他在2002年12月发表了一篇文章，我想这是第一篇关于798的外国报道。那时的大背景是房地产价格的上涨，是北京SOHO，整个故事已经在那儿了……**黄锐**是整个事情的领头人，798的代表。他指出了这里所体现的德国设计风格，并说他一直想在这里工作。

（之后）在“非典”前一个周末，一个展览被允许在北京举办，它本应被叫作“重建798”。**他们杜撰出这个标题，但是与厂方人员发生了冲突。他们说你们不能说重建798，因为它已经存在了！**因此他们不得不遮住所有海报上的“798”几个数字！这是它在03到06年之间被称为大山子艺术区的部分原因。直到政府介入，回收了土地并将其更名，它才重新被叫作798，但在那个时候，你就是不能这么叫它。这是一个非常中国化的事件。

*那么什么是798共同体？当时谁在那里？他们在做些什么？*

到03年春季，有个类似于租户协会的组织打算召开一个会议，让人们能够聚在一起，坐下来讨论这些问题。它确实是一个由**罗伯特·伯纳尔**一样的艺术家、一些画廊（尽管其实并不多）、**洪晃**（发行人）等组成的大杂烩，然后出现了一些杂志：很明显整个生活方式和时尚媒体在那时已极大地发展了；在这之前它们还处于十分原始的状态。（那个秋天）北京双年展开幕了——这是唯一的一件好事，并且是场地外的事件在这里发生。实际上，在尤伦斯当代艺术中心，**荣荣**和**映里**有一个展览，还有一个叫作“左手/右手”的中德合作的展览。

*这个共同体在何种程度上带动了此地的创造力？是否有一种团结和交流的感觉以某种方式影响了其内容？*

对于艺术聚落的第一个解释框架——至少在艺术背景方面——是中国艺术家村的整个历史。追溯90年代初的圆明园和90年代中期的东山村，以及所有先锋的行为艺术，然后当然是宋庄，在城市的边沿的一种边缘化的艺术家群落。**（与798）最根本的区别是，这是第一个新自由主义艺术区；第一个从一开始就有外国投资的艺术区**，无论是日本或美国的介入；而且它确实是第一次人们不是由于共同的艺术思想，而只是因为空间优美、房租便宜，以及其它理性原因而广泛聚集起来。

但至少刚开始这里有大量的艺术家，并且感觉上这里仍旧代表了一些东西，即使只是代表了



younger brother and some other artist friends found 798. We were walking along the central avenue, all hand in hand, smiling – like the mafia! We were extremely happy not only because we'd found studio space, but also because the factory, the surrounding area was so promising, we believed it was a great place to create art.

We came through number two gate and walked all the way down here. My first studio was next to BTAP – Beijing Tokyo Art Project. I also lived there for five years until 2006. I rented it from the management office, they'd already opened the space up to everyone: for artists, for workers, all kinds of residents.

They were still running factories back then. In 2001 there were more than 10,000 factory employees working and living in this area. At the beginning of 2004 there were only 4,000 workers left. By the end of 2004 when we doing the 798 Art Festival there were only 400 left.

*Aside from the practicalities of the place – heating, size and rent, for example – was there a specific attraction to cohabiting with other artists? Historically, what is the appeal of artists living in close proximity?*  
Artists seem to like to stick together – their existence can be lonely and alone, but they're nonetheless powerful as a collective. There are market-related advantages to clusters too – it's easier to be represented as a group, plus things like accounts and finances are easier to manage when you're more than one. Perhaps there's an element of 'playing it safe' – perhaps artists are somehow naive or innocent, always seeking that utopia...

*Was 798 that utopia that you and your fellow artists sought? In a country and city known for its censorship, did 798 offer more or less freedom than elsewhere?*

For a number of years, the admin office was really focusing on being the owner, the boss of the space but not so much of the content – they didn't care what was happening, they just cared who was in charge.

So in that way, at the time, it felt as if there was a lot of freedom because of that situation: they didn't care about the content, so it was much easier to be more experimental in terms of art and events, and really push boundaries. That also extended to local and international projects.

*And of course, that artistic experimentation caught the attention of the global art market. How did that impact 798 and creativity in China?*  
People have dispersed – people have gone their own way to develop. I just do my own work; others like **Cang Xin** caught the big wave of '05 – '08. It was a successful time in the market. Now that wave is over. Many artists lost their moment, their momentum by simply following the money. For artists, the market can be an opportunity but it can also potentially be a trap. You can get the benefit of it, but you also go up and down with it. As an artist, you should always be learning and challenging rather than going with the market, up and down. I dislike the market forever!

抽象的艺术。这里有一种不愿放手的违章居住者心态。当然，在那时大家普遍认为，它将会很快被拆除。

*但是当然，这并没有发生，这种威胁（这块区域将被夷平以让位于高新区）的消除如何改变了798的活力？是否有其它并发因素的作用？*

一直到2006年，在创意产业的话语权渗透入中国政府内直到无法被忽略的程度之后，798的未来才真正明朗起来，当然也有举办奥运会的因素……从2002年到2005年这整个时期是自下而上的，而不是自上而下的。如果有一种类似于草根艺术的东西存在，那是被更纯粹、非商业的艺术家所推动的，而当然它很快就崩溃了。同时还要考虑到中国艺术市场的出现。如果你仔细想想2002、2003、2004年，那时还没有一个真正的艺术市场，那时比现在更接近于90年代。那时中国并没有真正的艺术收藏家。

*部分是由于政府的吸纳；部分是由于新自由主义的发展。我们以质量来衡量——现在有多少好的画廊？*

所以这就是为什么798在2007年和2008年变得如此商业化。它的一部分被商业化实际上是一种更好的趋势……

*让我们从你刚来798的时候开始——那是什么时候，那时这里是什么样子，以及你从中看到什么潜力？*

2001年，我一直在寻找一个艺术工作室。我看了几个地方，但是没有发现好的。那是一个寒冷的冬天，但我找到的地方没有一个是有暖气装置的。我找过的几个工厂工作室连散热器都没有。于是我打电话给**艾未未**，他说：“跟我来”。就是这样，我、**艾未未**、**艾未未**的弟弟和其他一些艺术家朋友们找到了798。我们沿着中央大街手牵手散步，微笑——就像黑手党！我们非常开心，不仅是因为我们找到了可以作为工作室的地方，也因为厂区及周边地区的前景十分广阔，我们认为这是一个创造艺术的好地方。我们穿过二号院，一路走到这里。我的第一个工作室紧邻着BTAP——北京东京艺术项目。我在那里住了五年，直到2006。我从管理处将它租来，他们已经向所有人打开了大门：艺术家，工人，以及各式各样的居民。

工厂仍然在运行。在2001年有超过10,000名工人在这一地区工作和生活。在2004年年初只有4000名工人离开了。但到2004年年底，在我们做798艺术节的时候，只剩下400人左右。

*除了地点的可行性——例如暖气装置，大小和租金——是否存在一个特殊的吸引力，吸引你与其他艺术家共同居住？从历史上看，什么是使艺术家们比邻而居的吸引力？*

艺术家们似乎喜欢黏在一起——他们的生存可以是寂寞和孤独的，但作为集体的他们也是强大的。群聚也会带来市场方面的优势——作为一个群体它更容易被代表，再加上如此一来账户和财政状况之类的东西都更容易被管理。也许还有一个因素是“谨慎行事”，大概艺术家们都有些天真单纯，永远追求着乌托邦。

*798是否是你和你的艺术家同行们一直追寻的乌托邦？798是否比其他地方更自由？*

在一些年中，管理办公室确实很专注于充当拥有者，作为空间的主人却并不关心它的的内容——他们不关心发生了什么，只关心谁负责。

因此在当时，由于这种情况存在，感觉上似乎有很多自由：由于他们并不关心内容，所以艺术和活动可以更容易具备实验性，能够真正打破界限。这也扩展到本地和国际项目。

*当然，这种艺术实验引起了全球艺术市场的关注——它是如何影响798和中国的创造力的？*

现在，人潮慢慢散去，大家都找到了各自的发展方向，我只是还在做我自己的工作。有的人比如**苍鑫**抓住了2005~2008年的那段大潮，那是一个可以在市场上大获成功的时机。而现在，大浪已经过去，许多艺术家（由于只是简单地追求金钱）失去了时机和动力。对于艺术家而言，市场可能是一个机会，但也可能是个陷阱。你可以从中获利，但也会随之沉浮。作为一个艺术家，你应该用于保持学习和挑战的状态，而非跟着市场随波逐流。我永远爱不上市

**黄锐**  
7月23日  
咖啡厅/黄锐的家



# CONFLICT & TENSIONS

It was the artists' arrival in 2001 and 2002 that quietly sparked tensions at 798. Almost imperceptible at first, it escalated over the years into a crescendo, becoming increasingly divisive and ever more ugly.

Onsite alone, there were at least three main factions poised to clash. They were the 10,000 or so factory workers still living and working in the area in 2001; Seven-Star Group, the owner of the factories; and of course, incoming artists, curators and art-entrepreneurs. Each, it would seem, held their own vision for the district's immediate and long-term future.

For the remaining workers, the factories represented their livelihood and home. By this point, almost 60% of the area's original workforce had been laid off. If 798 were to become a district for art and artists, then the workers' fate would be irrevocably sealed. More to the point, these blue-collar workers cared little for contemporary art and according to artist Xu Yong, "They saw us as a bunch of lunatics and weirdos".

Positioned a step along the hierarchy was Seven-Star Group. Founded in 2001, the group consisted of various factories in the area. It was they who drew up the leases and contracts for 798's newest arrivals. Of course, they were more than happy to maximize earnings ahead of the area's repurposing: as early as 1994, the central government had earmarked the joint factories for redevelopment. It was to follow in the footsteps of Zhongguancun, the 'electronics city' positioned outside of 798. By 2000 a masterplan had already been created for the entire area, and by 2001, a scale model of future proposals enjoyed pride of place in management's office. In the meantime, Seven-Star reasoned, why not collect rent on otherwise vacant spaces? To their mind, 798's fate was not just a done-deal, but one that would earn them considerable profits. Focused on revenue and inflation, from around 2004 they started raising tenants' rent.

The third and final participants in a struggle that still continues today are, of course, the artists. Delighted at 798's potential for making and showcasing, those who signed contracts lived seemingly in denial of the area's imminent expiry date: that pending redevelopment into a tech zone. Despite Seven-Star's straightforwardness in the form of short-term rentals, the artists ploughed energy, funds and passion into diverting 798's destiny. Inevitably that occasionally included artworks and exhibitions deemed sensitive – politically, ethically or otherwise – by the government's Cultural Office.

Things continued in this vein until a 2006 intervention by Chaoyang district government. Conscious of the area's popularity and potential, they decreed it remain an art zone two years before the Beijing Olympics. Nonetheless, 798 continues to balance a precarious ecology that calls for constant negotiation, with tensions between various factions continually simmering away.

Xu Yong

25 July / White Café

*You moved into 798 in 2002 at a point when the former factories seemed fated to be razed and transformed into a tech zone. What was the atmosphere like then? Were artists reconciled to the fact that their spaces could only have a short life-span, or was there a determination to challenge 798's outcome?*

As soon as we arrived at 798, the management showed us the detailed master plans for post-2005, and told us we could only rent for three years. They even showed us the model! Nonetheless, we were still very excited about the space and jumped in to invest and realize our dreams of a space to make art. Even if we had to move out after 2005, at least we were part of that moment. That was something we could be proud of.



Photographer Xu Yong in 798 Art District  
摄影师 许勇 在798

# 矛盾和张力

*And yet, things didn't continue so smoothly...*

Conflicts came very quickly. I remember after all the studio renovations in 2003, **Huang Rui**, me and some others organized a joint opening event called '798: Reconstruction'. The local factory workers had some strong opinions: there were still factories operating at the time, and the workers were hurt by the exhibition's name. First, that 798 is the factory's name, not the name of an artist; and second that it sounded like a 'death penalty' for the factory and so by extension, its workers. So we had to tape over the Chinese characters; it became an event without a Chinese name. Nonetheless, the success of the event thrilled us... Before that exhibition, Chinese contemporary art was always semi-underground, it was quite suppressed. The 'Reconstruction' show brought Chinese contemporary art into public and media realms.

*Certainly, that was an almost prophetic moment in terms of 798 outwardly projecting its potential. What were the external forces shaping its development, or were all of its influencing factors playing out inside of the factory compound?*

The timing was important: in 2001, China got the right to host the 2008 Olympics, and so the government promised to allow more openness in terms of media and culture. So the event in 2003 didn't cause concern, neither did we need to file our event before its happening – although there were some plain clothes officials attending the opening!

Really, **2002 'til 2004 was the utopian age, idealistic and pure**. We were driven by passion, without thought of personal benefits. Most events were funded out of our own pockets, there was no return. At the same time, the conflict with administration was quietly simmering away. For them, it was unfortunate: they didn't realize how big 798's arts status was going to get. So we had a conflict – they still wanted so badly to rent it out according to the original plan, but our appearance spoiled that. They weren't earning much – spaces were cheap and they were renting to us. It cannot compare with the original plan which was to sell the land for a big development. They didn't know what contemporary art is. They saw us as a bunch of lunatics and weirdos!

*What was your relationship with management? We know that there was the somewhat fateful co-opting of Huang Rui's second Dashanzi festival in 2004, but were there any instances before that of them trying to 'muscle in' on artists' activities?*

Because the administration didn't know contemporary art and had no taste for it, they thought we were doing crazy things. For example, in 2003 or 2004 we were doing an event with a huge printed photo banner of two men and one woman, naked. It was what's called a 'water cutting', basically an industrial way of cutting things. It was hung on a 20-meter high building and all of a sudden, everything exploded: "How can you show these naked people on our buildings!?" They reported it to the government who sent people to shut it down. We said, "But this is art"; they said "This is *not* art!"

In the end we compromised – we kept the picture but cut out the nipples and other private parts. In a way we censored it, but it was so obvious.

*With the benefit of hindsight, that was probably an amusing episode all round! When it came to the issue of rising rents, though, matters got rather more heated...*

When it came to rent, it was very hard to reach common ground in a peaceful way. It seemed quite sensible to the government that as a group we could negotiate things like prices, even though it was sensitive. But we were never able to sit down, the three groups together – the artists, Seven-Star and the government to really discuss it. We tried, but it always got emotional. The management committee represents the government, and it's their job to maintain 798's role as an asset in Beijing, but also to make sure it doesn't get too touristy, too commercial. But Seven-Star Group is all about making money. Still their clash isn't as big as the one with the artists; they can still work together...

**Robert Bernell**  
25 July / Timezone 8

*You've been renting the factories' former Muslim canteen since 2001 and were one of the first foreigners on the scene. Once you opened the book store in 2003, did your activities in propagating art cause friction? What was the atmosphere like in those early days of 798's emergence as an art zone?*  
You need to keep in mind that Chinese contemporary art at the time was still very much underground. Almost every day I was expecting a knock on the

2001年，正是艺术家们的到来点燃了798的紧张气氛。起初几乎无法察觉，但多年以来不断加剧，日趋分化也更加难堪。

仅仅是在现场，就至少有三大冲突团体。他们分别是一万名左右于2001年仍居住和工作在该地区的工人；七星集团，工厂的所有者；当然还有涌入的艺术家、策展人和艺术创业者。每一个团体似乎都对这个区域的短期和长期未来有着自己的想法。

对留下的工人来说，工厂是他们的生计和家。从这点看，该地区60%的原有劳动力都被迫下岗了。如果798将成为一个艺术区，那么工人的命运将不可逆转地被终结。更重要的是，这些蓝领人根本不在意当代艺术，据艺术家**徐勇**说，**“他们把我们当成一群疯子和怪人。”**

层级结构的上一端是七星集团。该集团成立于2001年，由该地区的各个工厂所组成，他们负责草拟798新移民的租赁合同。当然，他们在这个地区重生之前就乐意将利益最大化：早在1994年，中央政府已指定将整片工厂区进行重建。它似乎将要成为另一个中关村，一个在798之外的“电子城”。到2000年整个地区的总体规划已形成，而到2001年，这个未来计划的比例模型已做立于管理方的办公室中。与此同时，七星集团想到，为什么不向闲置的空间收取租金？对他们来说，798的命运不仅是已尘埃落定的交易，而且还会给他们带来可观的利益。由于收入和通货膨胀的关系，从2004年左右他们开始提高租户的租金。

在这场维持至今的斗争中，第三类也是最后一类参与者自然是艺术家们。那些签了合同的人为798创造和展示的潜力感到欣喜，似乎拒绝面对这个区域即将面临的期限：开发重建成为一个高新区。尽管七星集团短期租赁的形式直截了当，艺术家们还是用活力、资金和激情奋力扭转了798的命运。当然，艺术品和展览偶尔在政治、道德或某些方面被政府文化办公室视作敏感区也是不可避免。

这样的状态一直持续到2006年，朝阳区政府开始出面干预。他们意识到该地区的人气和潜力，于是在北京奥运会的前两年下令把它保留为一个艺术区。然而，各派系间暗暗孕育的矛盾和张力需要不断地协调谈判，798仍保持着岌岌可危的生态平衡。

*您在2002年搬到798，那时的工厂似乎已注定要被夷为平地，重建为一个高新区。那时候的氛围是怎样的？艺术家们是安然接受他们的空间可能仅有短命的期限，还是有挑战798预定结果的决心？*

我们一到（798），管理方向我们展示了2005年后的详细总体规划，并告诉我们，这里只能租三年。他们甚至给我们看了那模型！尽管如此，我们还是为这个地方感到兴奋，并立刻开始着手实现我们艺术空间的梦想。即使我们不得不在2005年之后迁出，至少我们是那一刻的一部分。我们为此而感到自豪。

不过事情的进展并没有那么顺利……

冲突很快就来了。在2003年所有工作室进行装修之后，**黄锐**、我和其他一些人组织了一个联合开幕活动，名叫“798：重构”。对此当地工厂的工人提出了强烈的意见：当时仍有工厂在运行，展览的名字伤害了这些工人。首先，798是工厂的名字，不是一个艺术家的名字；第二，它听起来像是对工厂和它的工人宣判了死刑。所以我们只好用胶带遮住了中文，它成为了一个没有中文名的活动。（尽管这样）活动的成功还是让我们非常激动……在这个展览之前，中

**徐勇**  
2014年7月25日  
白咖啡

door saying we're going to have to close you down. But the cultural office agents were really nice: they'd come and look at the books and say, 'Look, women and children, other people might be coming in, take this book and put it down here, replace it with this instead'.

I found out later that the Head of the Cultural Office here was the person who gave the stamp of approval for the bookstore. He said they were watching me really carefully but we didn't cross any of their barriers so they let us keep going. That was because of **Chen Gang** of the Chaoyang District government. He told me that Chen Gang, the district's Party Secretary would come here in plain clothes regularly by himself and just look around. He'd studied in the US, and he was the one who followed it, he was the guy who let it happen. It was very secret, but if anyone had come to him with a problem he was the guy to say 'Don't worry: I'm on it, I'm monitoring it carefully'.

The artists were a very close knit group because they were also under these pressures, and to see those familiar faces was one part of it.

国当代艺术一直是半地下的、很压抑的状态。而“重构”活动让中国当代艺术进入了公众和媒体的视线。

*当然，这几乎是一个预言798向外展示它潜力的时刻。什么外部力量促成了它的发展，亦或所有工厂区内的影响因素都起到了作用？*

时机在其中起到了关键的作用：在2001年，中国获得举办2008年奥运会的权利，政府因此承诺允许在媒体和文化方面更加开放。所以2003年的事件没有引起担忧，也不需要我们在活动举办前提交报告——事实上还是有一些便衣警察参加了开幕活动！

的确，**2002年到2004年是乌托邦式的时代，理想而纯粹**。我们被热情驱使，不曾思考个人利益。大多数活动的资金都来源于我们自己，并且没有回报。同时，与政府的矛盾也在悄然酝酿。对于他们来说，这可能是个失误：他们没有意识到798的艺术地位会变得多高。所以我们面临着矛盾——他们仍然强烈地想要按照原来的计划，把它租出去，但我们的出现把这个计划毁了。他们没有赚到多少——地方很便宜，他们已经租给了我们。跟原来的计划——将这块地卖给一个大开发商，根本无法相提并论。他们不知道什么是当代艺术。

*你们与管理层的关系是怎样的？ 我们知道，2004年他们对黄锐的第二届大山子艺术节造成了重要的干扰，但在那之前他们有没有试图强硬干涉艺术家活动？*

由于政府不了解当代艺术也对此没什么兴趣，他们认为我们在做疯狂的事情。比如，在2003、2004年，我们在活动中做了一条印了两个赤裸男人和一个赤裸女人的巨大照片横幅。这叫做“水切割”，是一种工业上使用的切割方法。它被挂在一座20米高的建筑上，然后突然之间一切都爆发了：“你怎么能在我们的建筑上弄这些裸体的人！”他们向政府递交了报告，后者后来派人来把活动关闭了。我们说，“但这是艺术啊”。他们回答，“这不是艺术！”

最后我们妥协了——我们保留了那幅图，但切掉了私隐部分。我们以某种方式“审查”了它，但已太过明显。

事后看来，这可能只是有个有趣的小插曲！当涉及到租金上涨问题的时候，事态变得越发激烈……

租金的问题很难以和平方式达成共识。作为一个团体我们可以就租金问题进行谈判，尽管有些敏感，但对政府来说，这或许是个明智的决定。但我们始终没能坐下来，三个团体一起——艺术家、七星集团和政府，进行真正的讨论。我们努力过，但事态总会变得充满情绪化。管委会代表政府，他们的工作是维持798作为北京的一项“财产”，但同时也确保它不会太旅游化，太商业化。但是，七星集团只在乎怎么赚钱。不过他们的冲突还没有与艺术家的冲突大，他们仍然可以容忍彼此……

*你从2001年起租用了工厂区之前的穆斯林餐厅，也是这里最早到来的外国人之一。你在2003年开了这家书店后，与你推广艺术的活动有没有形成什么摩擦？798作为一个艺术区在其创业初期的气氛是怎样的？*

你必须知道，中国当代艺术在当时还是很地下的状态。那时几乎每天都有人会敲门来说我们将不得不查封这个地方。但是，文化办公室的人很好：他们会过来看看这里的书，然后说：“你看，女人和小孩，其他人也可能会进来，把这本书放到下面，再把这本书放上来。

后来我才发现文化办公室的主任就是批准书店开张的那个人。他说，他们一直密切关注着我们，但我们并没有越过他们的雷区，因此我们能得以保持经营。而这一切都是因为朝阳区政府的**陈刚**。他告诉我，**陈刚**当时是朝阳区的区委书记，他经常便衣造访，四处看看。他曾经在美国学习过，是他让这一切成为现实。这是非常秘密的一个信息，但如果有人带着问题去找他，他是那个说“不要担心：这事儿我管着，我密切监视着呢”的人。

艺术家是一个紧密的群体，因为他们都处在这样的压力之下，而遇见这些熟面孔也是其中一部分。

**罗伯特·伯纳尔**  
2014年7月25日  
东八时区



# CRITICAL CHANGE

From artists' early clashes with factory workers; politically-sensitive exhibitions; to ongoing strife surrounding rising rent costs, 798's course has rarely been smooth. Much of the district's friction is a direct result of its precarious relationship with Beijing's authorities. And yet, for many of those original settlers to the district there was a definitive tipping point, a moment of critical change that would alter 798's positioning forever. As an epicenter for contemporary art, inevitably, tensions continue to simmer; such is the nature of the district's mainstay: art. Nonetheless, its current situation is far more sanctioned, far more above-board and certainly far more 'sanitized' than those of its early days. What was the catalyst for its decidedly legitimate revolution that managed to be both radical and conservative, and what were its implications? Was the government's intervention into 798 its ultimate savior, or the beginning of the district's drawn-out downfall?

The consensus of those who were there is that it was sometime around 2004 that 798's balance permanently tipped from a settlement that if not ideological was at least somewhat grassroots in nature, to an altogether more sanctioned, staid incarnation of its former self.

A seismic shift in 798's standing in the eyes of Beijing's higher-ups came about in April 2005. With artist **Huang Rui** at its helm, the second edition of the Dashanzi International Arts Festival (DIAF) was, unsurprisingly, in the midst of a stand-off with the factories' management. On the eve of the event's opening, the factory finally called for DIAF to be cancelled, citing concerns over crowd control and fire regulations.

In a move likely viewed as passive-aggressive by factory management, Huang Rui promptly called a press conference, ostensibly to break the news of DIAF's cancellation. To everyone's surprise, some 100 media turned up, a result clearly pointing to some level of support – and perhaps even sympathy – from within the government. Whatever the authorities' stance, both 798 management and **Huang Rui** soon received a phone call from Chaoyang district government: not only did they fully understand the factories' concerns over safety and crowd control; in light of the interest surrounding DIAF they would be stepping in to oversee logistics.

Just like that, in the space of a phone call, 798 transitioned from precarious and underground to above-board and sanitized.

It was a critical juncture, and one that became increasingly convoluted. Having seen first-hand the potential of DIAF, and presumably keen to spruce up Beijing's 'soft power' ahead of the 2008 Olympic Games, the government and by extension, Seven-Star Group wanted in. Tensions rose, angry words were exchanged and in 2006, **Huang Rui** learnt that his contract at 798 was not to be renewed. An especially low point in 798's rollercoaster history, it was also prophetic: for Xu Yong, another of the district's key players, things got even worse in 2012 when he was effectively locked out of his studio over a very public rent dispute. The departures of both artists shook 798. Not only did it effectively shut out two of the district's most dynamic forces; more symbolically, their removal was arguably an open eschewing of perhaps some of the only real icons of whatever abstract ideology the district may have had.

Separated by six years and of both of questionable legality, the evictions damaged Seven-Star's reputation. In keeping with 798's narrative of solidarity and struggle, the group was accused of forcing out good people and good art. It's an indictment that for the most part has stuck, lending credibility to unquantifiable claims that 798's overall quality was better prior to its co-opting. All in all, and according to popular refrain, **Huang Rui**'s unceremonious booting-out represented a gloomy



Robert Bernell in his restaurant Timezone 8  
罗伯特·伯纳尔在东八时区



crossroads in the district's complex history.

With the authorities' intervention came cosmetic changes, too. First and most conspicuous was an enormous sign positioned directly outside of the area's South gate. Inside the compound, a steady smartening-up of roads and street furniture saw subtle landscaping details pop up here and there. Finally, in a typically heavy-handed approach, new road signs began to appear, directing visitors to spots now called 'Originality Square' (*Chuangyi Guangchang*) and the like...

It was the start of a long process of gentrification. Where the factories were once characterized by shirtless workers and muddy roads, its new image was all moneyed tourists, media buzz and freshly tarmacked roads.

Change transcended everything. It wasn't just camera-toting sightseers who were discovering 798's artistic treasure trove. The district's shift in gears from quasi-ideological arts commune to Beijing tourist attraction coincided with similarly irrevocable changes both in Chinese society and global tastes. Not only were collectors from China beginning to find their way to 798, internationally too, the art market had found itself a new darling: Chinese contemporary art.

In a matter of months, 798 was firmly on the map. Everyone – from tourists and taxi drivers, to collectors and curators – didn't just know of it, they were visiting in droves. That this overnight popularity sparked rises in rent was an inevitability almost as predictable as the artists' subsequent leaving, and yet, the correlation between these two seemingly unfortunate outcomes was not what it seemed. The artists who left 798 during its overnight emergence did not do so in protest at either mounting costs or gentrification of the area. Rather, they had become very, very rich. Suddenly very much on the radar, Chinese contemporary art was commanding prices ten-times more than just a few years prior.

The artists used their new-found wealth to build houses nearby, often incorporating studios and showrooms as well as more luxurious add-ons. Further debunking the myth that they were effectively priced out of the area, many continued their leases at 798, despite no longer living and working there. In this way, **the artists themselves arguably contributed to the diluting of 798's artistic integrity**: studios served as ornamental spaces to impress collectors, furthering the 798 myth. By now, the district's narrative for struggle and solidarity had become intertwined with the artists themselves and as such, inherent to the value of this new art from China. Simply put, artists sold a story to collectors, who in turn propagated the rose-tinted nostalgia of 798 far and wide.

There was no going back now: the essence of 798 was permanently, irrevocably changed.

Ma Shuqing  
26 July / Ma's Studio

*At some point after your own arrival to 798 in 2002, many of your fellow artists began to move out – how did that unfold? Over the 12 years that you've been here, have you observed any kind of pattern to the area's turnover of tenants? I remember at that time [during 798's heyday] I would see artists everywhere to the extent that I even got a little bit sick of them because I would always see the same faces, even though I didn't necessarily know them personally. We were all competing with each other to make a new creative space; everyone was doing the same thing – separately! But they're all gone today. It was a big change.*

*In terms of secondary industries – galleries, specifically – what changed there? How have they changed?*

One thing I've noticed since living here is that lots of galleries come here: they see 798 as a fun place and they want to experiment. But in a year they might not sell anything beyond just enough to cover the rent, so they leave. Every spring, I see people moving in and starting to renovate, and then moving out at the end of the year. But a lot of these people become second landlords – they keep the space to sublet to someone else. Even if they didn't bring in much money from the selling of actual art, they still make money on the rent – more, in fact.

*Presumably that's something Seven-Star is aware of?*  
It's complicated. If you ask the property management office they'll tell you the place is full already, but there are always new people arriving in 798. For me, I only meet with them once a year to pay the rent! Before, I had a longer term lease of five years, but since last year we can only get annual contracts.

# 关键性变化

从艺术家与工厂工人的早期碰撞、政治敏感的展览，到周边租金成本不断上涨的纷争，798的发展道路上很少有顺利的时候。该地区的大部分摩擦都是其与北京政府的不确定关系所直接导致的结果。然而，对于多数该地区的老住民来说，依然有一个明确的临界点，一个关键的变化时刻，将798的定位永远改变了。作为当代艺术的中心，角力局势不可避免地持续发酵；该区域的支柱的本质：艺术，也是如此。然而，目前的情况远比初期更具约束性，更光明正大，当然也更“净化”。对于这场具有决定意义的既激进又保守的改革，什么是它发生的催化剂？它的含义是什么？政府的干预究竟是798的最终救星，还是该地区的持续衰败的开始？

居住在这里的人们有一个共识：2004年左右，798的天平永远地倾斜了。它从一个即使不是精神上但至少是某种程度上根植于自然的聚居地，变成了一个与之前相比总体上更具约束和保守的化身。

在北京高层领导的眼中，798的地位于2005年4月发生了地震性的变化。在艺术家**黄锐**的指挥下，第二届大山子国际艺术节（DIAF），毫无意外地，开始远离厂区管理者的目标。在活动开幕的前夕，厂方最终决定将DIAF取消，他们给出的理由是活动超出了人流控制和消防法规的规定。

**黄锐**迅速召开了记者会，该行为很容易被工厂管理层认为是被动攻击，表面上是为了发布DIAF被取消的消息。然而出乎所有人意料，大约有100家媒体到场了，这种结果清楚地显示出政府某种程度上的支持——甚至可能是同情。无论当局的立场是什么，798的管理者和**黄锐**很快就接到了一个从朝阳区政府打来的电话：他们表示，他们不仅充分理解厂方在安全 and 人流控制方面的担忧；考虑到围绕着DIAF的利益，他们也会在后勤方面予以监督。

就这样，在这通电话之后，798从不稳定的、地下的状态摇身一变成了光明正大的、净化的格局。

这是一个关键节点，一个变得愈发错综复杂的节点。亲眼看到了DIAF的潜力之后，政府和七星集团也想要加入其中，致力于在2008年奥运会前提升北京的“软实力”。2006年，紧张气氛开始加剧，愤怒的情绪不断交织，黄锐得知他与798的合同将无法续签。这是798过山车般的历史进程中的一个极低点，同时具有预示性的是，对于徐勇——这个地区的另一位关键成员来说，事情在2012年变得更加糟糕，他在一场公开的租金纠纷中关闭了他的工作室。这两位艺术家的离场震动了798。不仅是因为两支该地区最活跃的力量被驱逐；更具象征性的是，这种驱逐可以说是一种对这个地区可能曾具备的抽象意识形态的唯一真实图腾的公开回避。

这种前后相隔六年的驱逐行为以及其可疑的合法性损害了七星集团的声誉。在这场798团结与奋斗的故事中，七星集团被控诉“封杀优秀人才和优秀艺术”。这是一纸诉状，为那些宣称798的整体质量要优先于它的屈从合作的大量声明提供了保证。总的来说，对黄锐的无耻驱逐代表了该地区复杂历史中一个黑暗的十字路口。

在当局的干预下，厂区开始了整治美化运动。首当其冲的是直接矗立在南大门外的一个显眼的巨大标志。厂区内，道路变得愈发整洁，街道设施和许多景观细节缀于各处。最后，一个典型的铁腕做法是，新的路标开始出现，将游客引向现在被称为“创意广场”等的地方……

这是漫长的地区更新过程的一个开始。过去，厂区的面貌一度是赤膊的工人和泥泞的道路；

Robert Bernell  
25 July / Timezone 8

*As not only one of the first foreigners here, but also one of the first businesses to establish roots at 798, you've been privy to many of the ups and downs, ins and outs of the district. The general consensus is that things started to shift around '03 or '04 – from your somewhat unique perspective are you able to offer any personal insights into how events played out, what was happening around that cusp of change?*

Well, in terms of artists' studios, there were never that many here – I would say **12 or 15 maximum**. This is the common misconception: people say that it's not the same as it used to be, that all the artists have moved out. **Sun Yuan** and **Peng Yu** and a few others are still here, not a lot of them. But still, 12 moved out. It wasn't like there was a mass exodus.

And when they did move out, many kept their leases. They used it as a kind of foothold. When a collector would come over from Holland or somewhere they'd be like 'Oh, meet me at my studio in 798'. So it was kind of a warehouse space for private showings and late night drinking sessions. And I think at that point, very quickly maybe within a year or 18 months, they were all very wealthy. All the artists had made a lot of money.

And so that's the other misconception, the other myth – that they moved out because the rent was too high. Not the case! They were number one, very wealthy; and number two, they didn't forfeit their leases. They kept their leases. But it probably wasn't a good place to work because there were always people knocking at the door.

*No matter whether artists held on to their leases, they nonetheless moved out. How did that happen exactly? What was the critical moment of change?*

**Huang Rui's** Dashanzi International Art Festival was absolutely a critical juncture because the night before, **Huang Rui** called us all together and said here's the deal: they're going to cancel it. They're saying it's because of fire regulations, crowd control... 'They' being the factory. **Huang Rui** had called a press conference and about 100 media came which was amazing to everybody – that meant there was some support in the government. Otherwise it never would have gotten that far.

Then the factory got really nervous because the media kept saying it's a disused factory that's become a new art district, they'd talk about the nascent beginnings of 798, that the factory was on its way out. The factory people thought 'Wait a minute: I've got plans for this place, I'm going to tear it down and make a lot of money, I can't do that if it's an art district'.

So that was their modus operandi: saying to **Huang Rui**, 'Sorry you can't do it'. **Huang Rui** was being investigated by the Public Security Bureau on a regular basis so he got to know these guys, much like the people who came to my bookstore. You get to know them after a while, be friendly with them. So he kind of mentioned to the supervisors that they're going to shut it down, he then mentioned it to his supervisor who took it back to some very high level people in the Chaoyang District government – at the very highest levels there was some support for this. And so miraculously **Huang Rui** gets a call and the factory gets a call from the Chaoyang district government saying 'Don't worry about traffic control, crowd control and fire control, we'll send all the police, traffic everything, I'll take care of it for you. We understand your concerns' – even though they're trumped up! And that was it: contemporary art was no longer underground, it was unofficially sanctioned.

That was key, the whole dynamic changed at that point. The collectors started collecting, all the millionaires and billionaires, the auction houses started carrying contemporary art, the whole thing just went insane – artists who were selling for US\$100 a canvass started selling for a US\$100,000 a canvas. **Cang Xin**, before he sold some of the documentation of his performance art for US\$500, he was now able to sell his entire body of work for US\$500,000, and so overnight these guys became huge! They're buying houses in Wanjiang, their wives are buying cars...

*Did that shift in dynamic change things on a social, day-to-day level? Did this new-found wealth create a buzz? Would you hear about prices artists were charging for their work? Presumably gossip was inevitable...?*

No, no one talked about it. They really needed to have that image of an underground artist working in a bare factory space, fighting against the government for democracy and freedom around the world... because that's what collectors wanted, there was no talk of money.

They'd start to develop social cliques that were outside of the art world. Bear in

而后来，它的新形象是有钱的游客，蜂拥而来的媒体和新铺的柏油碎石路面。

变化超越了一切。不止是身背相机的观光者，越来越多的人开始探索798这座艺术宝库。该地区从一个准意识形态的艺术公社摇身一变成为北京的旅游景点，而这恰恰与中国和全球社会品味不可逆转的变化同步发生。不仅中国的收藏家来到了798，国际收藏家也来了，艺术市场找到了自己的新宠儿：中国当代艺术。

短短几个月内，798就开始声名远播。每个人——从游客和出租车司机，到收藏家和策展人——他们不止听说过这个地名，而且成群结队地涌来。在798，由突然走红引发的租金上涨以及艺术家们的随后离开几乎是必然且可预见的结果，然而，这两个看似不幸的结果之间的关联并不是看上去那样。那些在798一夜成名之后离开的艺术家们并没有对逐渐增加的开支或该地区的更新发展发出任何抗议。相反，他们变得非常非常富有。在艺术的雷达显示屏上，中国当代艺术的价格在短短几年间翻了十倍以上。

艺术家们用他们新增的财富在附近建房，这些房屋往往包括了工作室、展示厅和各种更加豪华的附属功能。进一步揭穿传说的是，他们在该区域外已有明确的定所。许多人保留了他们在798的租约，但是并不再在那里居住和生活。这样一来，可以说是**艺术家们本身促成了对798艺术完整性的稀释**：工作室转变为为打动收藏者而设的观赏空间，这进一步“深化”了798的传说。到现在为止，关于该地区的团结奋斗的故事与艺术家本身交织在一起，成为了中国新艺术的固有价值观。简单地说，艺术家将一个故事卖给收藏家，收藏家们转而将这些关于798的怀旧乡愁散播到整个世界。

如今已经没有回头路了：798的本质已被永久地、不可逆转地改变了。

*在您2002年来到798后的某个时段，您的很多艺术家同行却开始搬出去——它是如何表现出来的？在这里的12年中，您有没有注意到该地区的租户流动是否具备某些模式？*

我记得那个时候（在798的全盛时期）到处都是艺术家，以至于我甚至有一点讨厌他们，因为我总是看到同样的面孔，即使我并不一定认识他们本人。我们互相竞争，都想创造一个新的创意空间，每个人都在做着同样的事情——以各自的方式。但如今他们都走了。这是一个很大的变化。

*在第二产业方面——尤其是画廊——发生了哪些变化？这些变化是如何发生的？*

自从住在这里以后我注意到的一件事是，很多画廊开始进驻：他们认为798是一个有趣的地方，想在这儿进行尝试。但在一年内，他们可能都卖不够可以支付租金的商品，所以最后离开了。每到春天，我都能看到有人搬进来，开始装修，然后在年底又搬出去。但也有很多人成为了二房东——他们保留着空间然后转租给别人。即使他们没法以销售实际的艺术来赚钱，但还是能赚到租金——实际上这样赚得更多。

*想必七星集团知道这些？*

这很难说。如果你问物业管理处，他们会告诉你这个地方已经全租了出去，但总有新的人来到798。对我来说，我只有在每年付房租的时候见到他们一次。以前我有五年的长期租约，但自从去年以来，我们每次只能获得一年的合同。

*您不仅是第一批进驻798的外国人之一，而且您的公司是第一批在此扎根的企业之一，您曾经历过该地区的许多的起落和人员进出。有一个普遍的共识是，局面在03到04年左右开始转变——从您较为独特的视角来看，这些事情究竟是如何演变的，以及在这些变化的风口浪尖究竟发生了些什么，对此您是否能够提供一些个人见解？*

就艺术家工作室而言，这里从来就没有过太多——**大概最多也就12到15家吧**。这是最普遍的误解：大家都说这里不像它从前那样了，所有的艺术家都搬出去了。**孙原**和**彭禹**等几个人还留在这儿，人数不多。尽管有12家搬了出去，但这并不等同于大规模的人员外流。

而当他们搬走后，许多人仍旧保留了他们的租约。他们把这儿当作一个立足点。当一个收藏家从荷兰或其他地方过来时，他们会说：“嘿，来我们798的工作室见面吧”。因此，这里更像是一个举办私人展览和深夜喝酒聚会的仓库。而且我认为这样的话，很快，也许一年或18个

马树青  
2014年7月26日  
马树青工作室

mind I had a coffee shop that evolved into a restaurant: very few artists came and the whole reason was that conspicuous consumption was completely off-limits. You get together and have a beer outdoors, but if you're really going to do some conspicuous stuff then you go someplace alone or with your other friends, with the collectors, the museum directors... It was very private, you never saw anyone spending any money.

*So you're saying that people were earning tons of money yet still sitting and sipping on their Tsingdaos outside?*  
Yeah – I mean, who doesn't enjoy that?! But the flipside, if you like the 'candy store to a child' element, you'd come across this bottle of Lafite 1971 and it's got this attraction, you've got the money, so you know... And you've heard about this three-star Michelin restaurant in Temple or wherever so you go there, but you don't let anyone see you...

*That's interesting: obviously this was 'new money', but artists were adopting this kind of old money attitude...*  
Yeah, the opposite of American nouveau riche where if you've got it you spend it – and you let everybody know, baby! 'Robert, what's the most expensive book you've got in the book store?!' I never had anyone say that to me!

月内，他们都变得非常富有。所有的艺术家们都赚了很多钱。

所以这是另一个误解或另一个传说——他们因为租金太高搬走了。而事实并不是这样！第一，他们非常富有；第二，他们并没有放弃租约。他们保留了租约。但这里可能不是一个适合工作的地方，因为总会有人来敲门。

*无论艺术家们是否保留了租约，但他们都已经搬了出来。到底发生了什么？变化的关键时刻是在什么时候？*

黄锐的大山子国际艺术节绝对是一个关键节点，因为艺术节前一天晚上，黄锐把我们大家叫到一起，对我们说：他们要取消艺术节，他们说这是由于消防法规和控制人群的原因……“他们”指的是厂方。黄锐曾召开记者会，并有100家媒体到来，这出乎每个人的意料——这意味着我们获得了政府的某些支持，否则事态不会发展得那么严重。

然后，厂方真的开始紧张起来，因为媒体不停地这个废弃厂区将成为一个新的艺术区，他们谈论798的新生，认为工厂找到了其出路。而工厂方想的则是“等一下，我对这个地方有个想法，我打算将这儿拆了，然后从中捞钱，如果它是一个艺术区我就没法这么做了。”

所以他们想了个办法，对黄锐说：“对不起，你不能这么做。”那时公安局正在对黄锐进行定期审查，因此黄锐认识那些人，就像我认识那些来我书店的人一样。跟他们相处一段时间之后你就会认识他们并变成熟人。所以他大概就对审查的人提到说厂方的人打算把这儿关闭，然后他的审查人把这个消息带给了朝阳区政府的某些非常高层的人物——在最高层的地方是存在某些支持的。之后奇迹般地，黄锐和厂方都接到了朝阳区政府的电话，说：“不用担心交通管制、人流控制和消防控制，我们会派些警察和交警等过来，我们会处理好这些的。我们理解你们的担心。”虽然那只是些场面话……所以事情的演变成为了：当代艺术不再是地下的，它被非正式地认可了。

这就是关键，整个事件从那一个点上开始变化。收藏家们开始踊跃收藏，所有的百万富翁和亿万富翁，拍卖行开始拍卖当代艺术，整个事情开始变得疯狂——那些本来卖100美元一幅画的艺术家们开始卖到10万美元一幅画。苍鑫，之前他将记录他行为艺术的一些文件卖了500美元；而现在他可以把他整个作品卖到50万美元，因此一夜之间这些家伙变成了大富翁！他们开始在望京买房子，他们的妻子开始买车……

*这些激烈的变化是否影响到了社会的日常生活？这些新增的财富引起了广泛关注和讨论吗？你是否会听说艺术家把他们的作品卖多少钱？流言大概是不可避免的吧……*  
不，没有人谈论它。他们真的需要一幅地下艺术家在一个荒芜的厂房里创作的场景，为了世界各地的民主自由而斗争……因为这是收藏家想要的东西，和金钱无关。

他们开始在艺术圈外发展小圈子。记得我有一间咖啡馆后来变成了一家餐厅：因为很少有艺术家来了，原因就是炫耀式消费已被完全禁止了。你们在露天喝啤酒、聚会，但是如果你打算摆阔，那么你得单独带你的其他朋友、收藏家、博物馆馆长等去其它地方。这是非常私密的，你再也不会看到有人大把花钱。

*所以你说人们赚着大把的金钱，却仍旧坐在外面喝着他们的青岛啤酒？*  
是啊——我的意思是，谁不享受它呢？但是从另一面看，如果你喜欢“糖果店里的孩子”，你遇到一瓶1971年的拉菲，被它吸引，而你又有钱，所以会……你听说过寺庙里或是哪儿有一家米其林三星餐厅，你去了，但是不会让任何人看见你……

有趣的是：很明显这是“新钱”，但艺术家们采用这种“老钱”的态度……

是的，美国暴发户的态度是有钱就花——而且让所有人都知道，“罗伯特，哪本是你从书店里买来最贵的书？！”而在这里，一切都正好相反，我从来没听过任何人对我说过这样的话。

# TOP-DOWN VS BOTTOM-UP

Fundamental to any discussions surrounding the motivations behind 798's establishment, its notorious conflicts over the years, or, indeed, its future, is its founding model. Was the district's naissance as naïve and ideological as popular discourse would have us believe? Or was it an altogether savvier operation? More pertinent a question might be: does it matter? For 798, the district's positioning and cachet afforded by a uniquely chequered past, perhaps not. However, if China is to build on 798's indisputable successes and further replicate this particular model of creative clustering elsewhere then the issue of whether 798's development was bottom-up or top-down becomes inescapable.

Anecdotes surrounding the artists' arrival to 798 have arguably become elevated to an almost mythical status, like sacrosanct episodes in the annals of contemporary Chinese art. Of course, it may well be that the beginnings of 798 were worthy of the nostalgia in which they're shrouded today. Think a ragtag, loose-fit trickle of artists, pooling resources and working together to transform a handful of factories in the final throes of industry into a sanctuary of creativity. A grassroots movement, the story continues, of passion, selflessness, and faith. A commune of complementary talents, some say, and a united, artistic front against the ominous systems and order of Chaoyang district government and Seven-Star Group.

Presented in this way, 798's development becomes almost unequivocally bottom-up. Strip back some of the romance, though, and alternative possibilities emerge, further complicating our understanding of the district's remarkable growth. Now, at a point in its history where 798 could go in one of two directions – through-and-through commercial; or a hybrid creative venture – presents an opportunity to learn from its past with an eye to the future. Specifically, that relates to how to, and indeed whether to, replicate the model elsewhere.

Was 798's development bottom-up in the truest sense? Perhaps not. After a seven-year exile in Japan, **Huang Rui** had returned to China secure in his career. Very far from the tired cliché of a struggling artist, he brought with him to Beijing prominence and success, as well as the commercial interests of **Tabata Yukihiro** and BTAP. The next logical step was to find a space for both his own art, as well as a viable starting point that would allow Chinese contemporary art to catch up with ongoing global art superstructures. For all of its tensions – and perhaps even *because* of those increasingly overt conflicts – 798 proved the ideal base from which to kick off a new artistic agenda for China.

798 presented something of a blank canvas. A near-vacant space, at the beginning at least, it was relatively straightforward for the original artists – **Huang Rui**, **Xu Yong**, et al – to make their mark. With few necessary



Beijing Design Week director **Beatrice Leanza**  
北京设计周总策划 毕月



# 自上而下 或自下而上

compromises, exchanges or even discussions, it could be said that those early settlers of 798 simply ploughed ahead until their cause had garnered sufficient momentum for outsiders to take notice. Suddenly, that bottom-up diagnosis seems rather less clear-cut.

Easing 798's transition from industrial hub to art district were at least two sources of foreign funds. Respectively, they were from Japan, in the form of BTAP; and from the US, thanks to **Robert Bernal**'s bookstore. This was significant, and is indicative of the fundamental difference between 798 and nearby artist settlements like Yuan Ming Yuan and Songzhuang: right from the outset, the ideologies behind creatives' moving to the area weren't only artistic. Rather, they were also financial, political, and most of all, long-term. Despite Seven-Star's insistence that the site was soon to be redeveloped into a tech zone, foreign investment would suggest that there was nothing spontaneous, nothing freefall about 798's strategy. Whilst certainly opportunistic, its approach was also very carefully considered.

It was a development of events that if not wholly top-down, nonetheless played out rather more ambiguously than 798's quasi-mythical reputation would lead us to believe. Certainly, **Huang Rui, Xu Yong** et al's rallying of their fellow artists did ultimately influence changes in policy farther up the hierarchy: a classic component of bottom-up organization. Still, 798's situation was arguably more opaque for several key reasons: first, the considerable reputation – and as such, power – of its principle instigators; second, that inflow of foreign investment; and third, the relative autonomy those two factors afforded, at least at the beginning of the district's artistic rebirth.

Nonetheless, the trajectory was short-lived. Once the government began showing an interest in partaking in 798's success – specifically the co-opting of the second Dashanzi International Art Festival – the situation crystallized. In short, the artists were no longer running the show.

Be it flashing Beijing's cultural card ahead of the 2008 Olympics, or enticing foreign tourists to the city, agendas altogether higher up fast replaced those of the artists. Discussions derailed and quickly, 798's power shifted into the hands of the authorities. That this transfer coincided with unprecedented growth in the international market for Chinese contemporary art only accelerated change, paving the way for a new era in 798's development.

Take UCCA, for example: whilst privately-funded and as such outside of the government's remit, the museum nonetheless relies on visitors for a significant portion of revenue. As such, a tourist-heavy zone (and one poised to reap the benefits of a brand new metro station in 2015) is not just advantageous, to some extent, it shapes their activities. One must ask: had 798 followed a more grassroots artists' village model, would the likes of UCCA have come? And without the quality, caliber and professionalism they undeniably bring, how attractive would the district really be?

*At the time of 798's coming into being you were established at what was already the city's second creative cluster, Caochangdi. From our discussions over the years, I sense that that distance has afforded you a different perspective on the area's development. What's your take on the quasi-legends surrounding 798's founding: was it a case of artists spontaneously rallying together to realize a shared vision, and did that spark a uniquely new era of creativity? Or were there more complex motivational factors at play?*

It's never just the container that shapes the content; there were two forces coming together. **I believe 798 is a completely top-down enterprise.** That doesn't mean some kind of evil 'black hand' or mysterious *deus ex machina*. Nor does it point to the government or some political party in disguise. But it's always been a top-down enterprise, even if you believe it was naively envisioned as a place to house an artistic creative community, albeit one that was then co-opted and completely derailed... but that's another story. No, 798 was top-down because apart from the factory workers, there was no preexisting community: nothing was there, it was an empty ground.

So we're not talking about an organic, productive dialogue between communities that gave rise to something else; rather, it was a vacant space that someone claimed. It was a different kind of urban phenomenon from a bottom-up development like Dashilar that factors in an element of unpredictability.

关于798成立背后的动机、这些年的争端以及798未来的探讨之关键在于对其成立模式的探索。这个地区的诞生是否像传言那般单纯和意识形态化？或者它其实是一项精明的操作？更恰当的一个问题也许是：它到底有什么重要性？对于798这样一个因为特定的沧桑历史而赋予地位和声望的地方，也许它并没有什么重要性。然而，如果中国要在其他地方复制制798这类创意集群的成功模式，那么我们不可避免地需要研究798的发展模式，到底是自上而下还是自下而上。

因为艺术家们的到来，他们在798的轶事将这里提升到近乎神话般的地位，成为中国当代艺术史册中的神圣剧集。当然，最初的798也许的确值得如今的艺术家们怀念。试想当时那群贫穷松散的艺术家的资源，集中资源，共同合作，将为数不多的工厂从垂死挣扎地变为创造的圣殿。这是一场草根运动，关于热情、无私和信仰的故事始终在继续。有人说，这是一群互补人才的公社，是一条对抗朝阳区体制秩序以及七星集团的艺术联合战线。

从这方面来说，798的发展几乎确定是自下向上的。抛开那些浪漫，各种可能性的发生使我们对这个地区的非凡成长的理解变得更为复杂。现在，在798发展历史的分岔路上，它可以走向两个方向——完全商业化；或混合创新企业化——这也是一个联系过去着眼未来的机会。具体地说，这也与如何以及到底是否应该在其它地区复制这个发展模式紧密相关。

798的发展实际是自下向上的吗？也许不是。在居留日本七年后，**黄锐**回到中国维护他的事业发展。他并不是那种俗套的苦苦挣扎的艺术家。他把他的声望和成功，以及**田畑幸人**和BTAP的商业兴趣带到了北京。接下来的步骤是找到自己的艺术空间，以及一个可行的起点，使中国当代艺术追上全球艺术品上建筑不断前进的脚步。所有的紧张局势，甚至这些越来越明显的冲突，都使得798成为了一个理想的启动基地，新的中国艺术议程将在这里开启。

798是一块空白的画布。一块几乎未被使用的空间，至少在一开始，它就像是明确地为了最初的艺术家们——**黄锐、徐勇**，等等——让他们做出一番成绩。最初定居798的艺术家们很少面临什么必须的妥协，甚至讨论和交流，他们只是向前耕耘着这片土地，直到他们的事业争取到了足够的势力，从而引起了外界关注。这么一来，说798是自下而上的发展的论断似乎又没那么清晰准确了。

798从工业中心过渡到艺术区至少得益于两股外国资金的注入：来自日本的BTAP；以及来自美国的资金，这多亏了**罗伯特·伯纳尔**的书店。它们的意义是重大的，这意味着798与附近其它艺术家居住的圆明园和宋庄有着本质上的区别：从一开始，注入798的创意者背后的意识形态便不仅仅只有艺术的。相反，它还是金融的，政治的，而且绝大部分都是长期性的。尽管七星集团坚持这块地方很快将被改建成一个新新区，外国投资者却认为并不存在自发的

Beatrice Leanza  
24 July / Opposite House

Quite counterintuitive,  
quite accurate...

Nothing could ever come in the way of 798 and its development but through those that invested in it, and they came. You know, 798 had no legacy to make for itself; it had to create an afterlife instead.

*That rather contradicts the perhaps more populist claims of a bottom-up movement. Are you suggesting that this narrative of a grassroots artistic community is simply a construct?*

Yeah, totally, that's exactly it. Don't get me wrong – I'm not demonizing the intentions of those that came to 798: they did it for the good of their peers. I'm not discrediting anyone in that sense, but I think it's very different from saying 798 raised because there was this very far-flung vision from these communities. There was no projection at that level.

*You could argue that the situation you're describing is more organic, as opposed to something that's planned as bottom-up and anticipates an ongoing evolution.*

I think that the people involved were very aware, not only of where they were coming from but also where they wanted to go. I mean the fact that this place was claimed for this purpose, the good deeds of art, that's fine, but I don't think it's so innocent. This was not so naïve as artists back in the early '80s finding refuge in the Yuan Ming Yuan – *that's* grassroots. But 798 was different. For starters, it was 2002. **Huang Rui** had come back from years spent in Japan at a point where his career in the arts was pretty self-affirming. He wanted to create a space for that

Artists followed him and there was this cluster in what they called the *Tong Dao*, this corridor where there is **Zhao Bandi**'s studio now, this corridor that has all these modular spaces, those were all artists' studios where they'd hold solo shows. So there were people who wanted to be part of it, but also: what was the alternative?

*Perhaps you're right: things weren't so spontaneous and altruistic; there was an agenda. But was there also an ideology?*

That *is* an ideology. Or at least it is in China. At that time, the situation in China was one where perhaps people weren't provided with the tools and means to do what they wanted to do. So they go make them for themselves. Let's not forget, this came at a point when the era of opportunism loomed large, of **Deng Xiaoping**'s proclamation of go and make yourself. But the other thing is that this phenomenon, it's not a product of an instantaneous, out-of-the-blue kind of context. The context was conducive to it and that started 15 years before, it started well back into the early '90s.

*It's interesting what you say, but at the same time we can't deny that also fresh in at least some artists' minds were memories of those 'creative clusters' that preceded 798 – the artists' villages – being bulldozed, sometimes with people still living and working there. In that sense, didn't 798 at least offer a stability that wasn't available elsewhere?*

Yes, but there were other places where they probably could have had that, but they just didn't go for it. It probably would have taken more effort [whereas] 798 was an empty compound or quickly becoming that. This is a typical phenomenon of claiming an unclaimed space, and whatever grew out of it, the moment things started being favorable and were looking favorable for that type of business, the picture changed completely.

That came together with an openness that was ready to circulate these tangible and intangible resources. So the machine wasn't simply about those who invested in 798; at the same time was a larger internationalization of what's going on. Artists were traveling more, they were starting to enter the larger superstructure of art, the system of contemporary art. So at some point it was no longer even about them or that place itself.

*You seem to be describing a rather complex convergence of opportunism on the part of the artists, coinciding with fortuitous vacancies of factory spaces – the very fact they opened their doors – along with bigger artistic shifts on levels both national and international. In that sense, your view is a very wide-reaching one but also one that takes into account all kinds of nuances of context.*

I always think that when you talk processes – top-down, bottom-up – they involve constituencies, there is always a dialogue going from one side to another, with the awareness of the fact that you need to put yourself in a

798战略, 虽然有些机会主义, 但其路径也被纳入了详细考虑。

这一系列的事件, 或许并不是完全自上而下的发展, 但其相比798类神话的声誉更模糊的演变却让我们相信或许的确如此。当然, **黄锐**、**徐勇**等人对其它艺术家的号召力最终影响了更远处政策的变化: 一个典型的自下而上的组织的组成部分。不过, 798现象的越发不透明有以下几个主要原因: 第一, 相当大的声誉, 以及始作俑者的力量; 其次, 外国资本的流入; 第三, 至少在该地区的艺术重生初期, 前两个因素所带来的相对自主性。

尽管如此, 这种轨迹是短暂的。一旦政府开始有兴趣参与798的成功, 特别是第二届大山子国际艺术节中政府的介入后, 情况便改变了。简而言之, 艺术家们不再举办这些展览。

无论作为北京2008年奥运会前闪烁的文化名片, 或吸引外国游客的城市景点, 798的各项议程都迅速完全取代了艺术家们的计划。关于798的讨论迅速偏离了轨道, 798的权力也转移到政府手中。伴随这种权力转移同时发生的是中国当代艺术在国际市场上前所未有的增长, 而这也仅仅加速了变革, 为798新时代的发展铺平了道路。

以尤伦斯当代艺术中心 (UCCA) 为例, 这个博物馆由私人投资且无政府划拨, 其主要收入还是要依靠游客。因此, 一个游客量巨大的区域 (2015年地铁站修成后将更为获利) 并不仅仅是优势, 从某种程度上来说, 它塑造了这里的活动。人们不禁要问: 如果798走的是更为草根的艺术家村模式, 像UCCA这样的机构还会入驻吗? 如果没有质量、标准和专业度, 这个区域又如何具有吸引力呢?

*798形成的时候你们已经建立了城市的第二个创意集群——草场地。从我们关于这些年的讨论里, 我感觉到, 距离使你对这个地区的发展拥有了一个不同的视角。你怎么看798建立所产生的类神话现象: 是艺术家自发团结在一起实现共同愿景,并引发独特创造力的新时代?还是有更复杂的动机因素在起作用?*

它不只是一个塑造内容的容器, 也是两股力量的结合。我相信798是一个完全自上而下的事业。这并不意味着有某种邪恶的“黑手”或神秘的外力介入。也不是说这是政府的伪装。但它一直是自上而下的集团, 即使你认为这里曾被天真地设想为一个艺术创意社区的所在地, 尽管它后来被同化并完全脱轨……但这是另一个故事。不, 798是自上而下的, 因为除了工厂工人, 这里先前并不存在任何社区: 什么都没有, 它是空的。

所以我们不是在谈论因社区带来新生这么一个有机的、富有成效的对话, 我们谈论的是一个未被利用的空间。这是一个另类的城市现象, 不同于那些自下而上的城市开发——例如有着不可预测性因素的大栅栏。798的发展是通过投资, 如果没有这些它不可能发展。你知道, 798本身并没有任何遗产; 它必须依靠创建, 用新的生命来取代。

*这与一直以来声称798是一场自下向上运动的说法是完全矛盾的。你认为这个草根艺术社区的故事只是一个简单的构建吗?*

是的, 就是这样。别误会我, 我无意将最初来798的艺术家的意图妖魔化: 他们在行业中是优秀的。从这个方面来说, 我不怀疑任何人, 但人们说798的崛起是因为这些团体的远期愿景, 我认为事实与此不符, 他们当时并没有规划得那么遥远。

你可能觉得你描述的情况更本质, 因为它对798按照自下而上的计划持续进化这一说法提出了反对。

我认为相关的人们都非常清楚他们来自哪儿, 他们想去哪儿。我的意思是, 这个地方的本质是为了推广艺术的善行, 这很好, 但我不认为它真的那么单纯。这并不像80年代初艺术家在圆明园找到避难地那样天真——那些才是草根。798是不同的。首先, 对于艺术家们来说, 那已经是2002年。**黄锐**在日本居留多年后回国, 那时的他对其艺术事业已充满了自我肯定, 他需要为他的艺术创建一个空间。

艺术家们追随着他, 那时候他们聚集在所谓的“通道”——一个走廊, 也是**赵半狄**现在工作室的所在地。这个走廊里所有这些模块化的空间都是艺术家的工作室, 他们会在那里举办个人

毕月

7月24日

瑜舍酒店, 北京

出乎意料, 但正是如此

Ma Shuqing  
26 July / Ma's Studio

dialogue with that other part. So there is some compromise that you have to come down to. With 798, nothing like that was in place, so it was not the product of a conscious, politically-driven or activisitc form of resurgence of an idea or an ideology that was there, scattered and had to be regrouped. So what is left is what we have today.

*You've been resident at 798 since 2002 and so experienced its 'heyday' first hand. That coincided with unprecedented peaks in the Chinese contemporary art market – to what extent did one drive the other?*  
From the very beginning, 798 has always attracted foreign – mainly western – buyers and collectors to search for Chinese art, that is, art that's related to China. I mean literally, with a Chinese face! So my art wasn't necessarily what they were looking for. So for me, I didn't go through that rapid rise of selling lots of paintings; for me, it was it was always a flat, peaceful, floating status. It was steady.

Emotionally, I didn't go through those ups and downs like others did. And it's not even like all of them became rich and then moved out, it was more the mental status that they overnight become 'rich', suddenly 'successful' and therefore invited to show in exhibitions a lot.

*When you talk about the market in this way, and specifically your example of foreigners' ideas of what Chinese art 'should' look like, it seems as if 798 has been shaped as much from outside as from within...*  
I think one of the things that has helped keep 798 as not a total tourist zone is the fact that we have these great international institutes here like Pace, Ullens and Evergreen gallery. I would even go as far to say that they're amongst the best art institutes in China. They really helped raise the standard, change the image of art in China from something with a Chinese face – you know, something very clichéd. They elevated Chinese contemporary art appreciation: What could it be? What should it be? Their existence raises the level and maintains the area's value.

展览。因此人们想成为其中的一部分，但也同时因为：他们还有什么其它选择呢？

*也许你是对的：事情并不是那么自发和无私的，都是有计划的。但这同样也是一种意识形态吗？*

这是一种意识形态。或者至少在中国是。当时中国的情况是，人们没有工具和手段来做他们想做的事。所以他们只能自己去创造。别忘了，当时正是一个机会主义时代，邓小平关于“自我创造”的宣言对人们产生了巨大影响。但另一方面，这种现象并不是一个瞬时的、突如其来环境下的产物。大环境一直是有利于它的，而且这种大环境于15年前就开始了，最早始于90年代早期。

*你说的很有意思，但同时我们也不能否认至少在一些艺术家心中798最初的“创意集群”——所谓艺术家的村庄——那些鲜活记忆已被铲平了，尽管有时候人们仍然在那里生活和工作。从这个意义上说，至少798提供了其它地方所没有的稳定性，难道不是吗？*

是的，但是也有其他地方可以提供这样的稳定，只是他们没有去。那可能需要付出更多的努力，而798是一个空闲的或者说能迅速变得空闲的场地。占领一块无人占领的空间是一个典型的现象，不管事态如何变化，当一切开始变得适合开展艺术活动后，情况就完全改变了。

与此同时伴随而来的是这些有形和无形资源的流通开放。所以798并不只与那些投资798的人相关，它同时也是一场更大的国际化进程。艺术家们越来越多地去旅行，他们开始进入更大的艺术上层建筑和当代艺术的系统。所以在某种程度上它甚至已与艺术家和该地本身无关。

你似乎在描述一个相当复杂的融合：机会主义的艺术家与偶然的空缺的工厂空间——事实上他们打开了它们的大门——以及在国内和国际水平上更大的艺术转变。在这个意义上，你的观点是非常深远的，也考虑到了大环境中的各种细微差别。

我总是认为，当我们讨论发展进程时——自上而下、自下而上——它们牵涉到不同的团体，总有从一方到另一方的对话，而且你必须很清醒地把自己放进与另一方的对话中。所以你需要做一些妥协。之前并没有类似798的存在，所以它不是意识、政治导向的产物，也不是原有艺术概念或意识形态分散重组而产生的形式复兴。所以剩下的就是今天我们所看到的。

*你自2002年以来一直居住在798，经历了所谓的“鼎盛时期”。伴随而来的是中国当代艺术市场前所未有的高峰——你认为两者之间是怎样相互驱动的？*

从一开始，798一直吸引外国买家和收藏家——主要是西方的——来寻找中国艺术，与中国相关的艺术。但不夸张地说，我认为其实是寻找带有中国面孔的画作！所以我的艺术并不一定是他们寻找的东西。因此对我来说，我没有经历过画作销量的快速增长；对我来说，它总是一个平坦、平和浮动的状态。很稳定。

我没有像其他人一样经历情感上的那些起伏。也并不像他们那样变得富有然后搬出去。其实他们一夜之间变得“富有”，突然“成功”，接着被邀请各种展览，这些更多是一种精神状态的改变。

当你从这方面来谈论市场时，尤其是你谈到外国人眼中的中国艺术“应该”是什么样子的例子，让我们觉得塑造798的因素似乎更多的是来自外部而非内部……

我认为保持798为非纯旅游区的一个重要因素是因为这里有很多伟大的国际机构，如佩斯画廊、尤伦斯当代艺术中心和常青画廊等。我甚至觉得它们是中国最好的艺术机构。它们真的提高了水准，改变了中国艺术的形象，使其不再是仅仅展示带有中国面孔的一些作品——你知道，那些都已经很老套了。它们提升了中国当代艺术鉴赏层次：它可以成为什么样子？它应该成为什么样子？它们的存在提高了水准也维持了这个区域的价值。

马树青  
马树青工作室  
2014年7月26日

# LEGACY

The 798 of today is far removed from that of those early days of uncertainty and conflict. Regardless of its founders' intentions, the legacy of the former factories is questionable: is it still a critical cornerstone of contemporary Chinese art, or has 798 been reduced to a visitor attraction that lacks substance and intellect? In what ways have its function and significance shifted over the years?

At first glance, a process of gentrification has seen the area smarten up its once industrial image; guidebook-wielding sight-seers replace blue-collar workers; and trendy cafés boasting global cuisines replace the factories' former canteens. Change to this extent rarely happens in isolation: China has also changed. In all sorts of ways, the country's horizons have expanded in parallel with its art, and with 798: since the district's emergence in 2001, China has joined the WTO, grappled SARS, won and hosted the Olympic Games, and organized the biggest ever World Expo. At the same time, its art began turning heads both at home and abroad to create a new, lucrative market. The resulting exposure from all of these incidents and events turned a spotlight on China.

Zooming back on to 798, the area inside that once single block perimeter has physically changed. Shops, galleries and people now spill outside of a once distinct border, encroaching on to adjacent areas like 791 and broadening the physical definition of what we mean by '798'. It's smarter, too: gone is the mud, the dust and the potholes, replaced with tidy tarmac, uniform signage and low-level parking barriers. Unusually for a recently-gentrified urban area in China (or anywhere), the universal signifiers of money, leisure and lifestyle – think Starbucks, McDonalds and the like – are conspicuous by their absence. Their non-existence is refreshing, lending 798 a small-scale, city feel, without the typical, day-to-day trappings.

The tenants of 798 have similarly changed beyond recognition. For a short time it was home to a cluster of artists; today, only a handful live on-site. Those now living remotely still maintain a presence in the warren of factories, and are regularly seen showing off their secondary studios to collectors enchanted by the legends that continue to swarm 798. Shops, restaurants and cafés have also multiplied, frequented by the smartly-suited staff of Audi and Qihoo 360's nearby headquarters.

The most instantly noticeable change between the 798 of then and the 798 of now is the visitors, both in terms of quantity and type. Thanks to myriad travel guides, city magazines and specialist art publications, the former factories are no longer the preserve of intrepid industry insiders or in-the-know collectors; everyone, it seems, knows about 798. That includes tourists from China and abroad, as well as Beijing-based day-trippers pushing strollers, guiding wheelchairs or walking dogs. Most eye-catching of all are the young women gathering up the now rather grubby skirts of elaborate rented wedding dresses, bored-looking grooms in tow. That couples choose 798 as a backdrop for wedding photographs seems significant. Whether it stems from pride, curiosity or fashion, their presence feels positive.

All of these changes point to a fundamental shift in 798's spirit, its essence and function. Once concerned with boldly finding a first space for Chinese contemporary art – a flag-bearer of sorts – after that happened 798's responsibilities changed. Less pressing, it was if the zeal of the place was extinguished. Whilst 798 may never have been ideological per se, its community was nonetheless united for a common cause: survival. Now backed



UCCA Director Philip Tinari  
尤伦斯当代艺术中心馆长田霏宇



# 遗产

by strong support across all strata of government, that urgency feels all but gone. Of course, galleries, institutions and artists continue to face pressures, be they of rising rents, short-term contracts or shifting markets. Nonetheless, 798's sanctioned status brings with it infinitely more security than those early settlers faced.

Whilst they no longer gather on street corners for barbecue and beer, for the most part, 798's core community is still there. Older and less ardent perhaps, less close-knit and certainly better-off, the network is still loosely in place, regularly passing through **Robert Bernell's** Timezone 8 Café for a coffee and sandwich. Their presence is diluted now by the countless others who throng around them in business suits, holiday clothes or uniforms, each with their own agenda and purpose that's far removed from 798's earlier visions. Nonetheless, if 798's founding spirit and zeal *had* to be suppressed and if change *had* to happen, then this newer pace is far from stagnant.

So what does it all mean? Is there anything left of the 798 of old, and if not, does that matter? On balance, through all the changes of the past 14 years, has 798 lost more than it has gained? If now is the afterlife of 798's birth, then what will be the legacy of this current period that so carefully balances high art and mainstream entertainment? Is that equilibrium poised to tip?

Whatever the future holds for the district, its romanticized back story seems set to stay. Certainly, it serves several important functions. Take artists' savvy, ulterior motives behind retaining studios at 798 despite now living elsewhere: it adds value for collectors keen to buy into the fabled history of 21<sup>st</sup> century Chinese art, a veneer of controversy, and of authenticity. It's a practice that touches on the significance of 798, its function and legacy.

Although far from devoid of culture, much of China's tumultuous 20<sup>th</sup> century presented a comparatively arid landscape for creativity. For roughly 30 years artistic discourse was muted, stunted and suspended as the newly-founded People's Republic attended to more pressing matters. When the intensity thawed, art duly hurtled forward, more than making up for its enforced hiatus thanks to pioneers like **Wang Keping**, **Mao Lizi** and of course, **Huang Rui**. But perhaps, even by 2001, modern and contemporary Chinese art hadn't yet caught up with itself? And perhaps it still needs stories, figureheads and ritual to make sense of the flood of creativity post-opening up? 798's timely emergence allowed for a much-needed framework and narrative that lent art from China the grounding it needed to soar. It rooted China's art scene, presenting collectors and art aficionados alike with a tangible, bricks and mortar space to latch on to and grasp.

A concentration of artists, albeit operating more individually than collectively, further accelerated the process. Assumed roles within the fledgling community fast created systems and networks that eased and facilitated China's manoeuvring onto an international stage that it would go on to take by storm.

As a kind of headquarters, showroom or epicenter from which to spread Chinese contemporary art, 798 served its purpose well. It created a buzz, a momentum and most of all, a community that got artists noticed, paving the way for not only the dizzy heights reached by the international art market in the early- to mid-2000s, but also exhibitions like Asia Society and SFMoMA's 'Inside Out' and later, 'China Design Now' at London's V&A Museum. Simply put, 798 put art from China firmly on the map.

So what now? If 798 has served its founding purposes – housing artists, getting them noticed, enchanting the world – is it now redundant? Does it have a useful function beyond entertaining those guidebook-wielding tourists and providing an 'edgy' backdrop to saccharine wedding photographs? Do critical offerings from UCCA, Pace, Long March et al justify the explosion of unexciting tat that threatens to swallow 798 whole? Has the place been reduced to merely a crowd-pleasing façade, and if so, where is the heart of contemporary Chinese art today? Culture – both its production and manifestation – is increasingly dispersed in China compared to even a decade ago, and yet 798 seems to have retained its reputation as 'figurehead'.

Arguably, and despite its ardor becoming steadily diluted by those lackluster art galleries, purveyors of tat, and wedding photographers, 798 still bears a

如今的798已经远离了其初期的不确定性和矛盾性。无论其创始人的意图为何，曾经的工厂遗址仍然存在：它是否仍然是中国当代艺术的重要批判性基石？又或798已经弱化为一个缺乏实质和思想的旅游景点？它的功能和意义在这些年里有了哪些变化？

乍看之下，士绅化过程已经美化了这个工业区域的旧有形象：拿着旅行指南的游客取代了蓝领工人；时髦的咖啡馆提供的全球美食取代了曾经的工厂食堂。这一程度的改变绝非孤立：中国也发生了变化。在艺术发展的同时，中国的其它各个领域发展扩大。（在各个方面，国家见识的扩张与连同798在内的艺术发展并行不悖。）对于798来说，自2001年该地区崛起的同时，中国加入了世贸组织，与“非典”作斗争，成功举办了奥运会，组织了有史以来最大的世博会。同时，其艺术市场——这个国内外新兴的、有利可图的市场也开始崭露头角。所有事件和活动曝光的结果使得中国处在了聚光灯之下。

镜头拉回798，曾经是单块区域的内部面貌已被改变。商店、画廊人满为患，溢出了实际的区域边界，甚至侵占到邻近的791地区，使得798的“事实区域”比我们所说的“798”定义中的范围更大。这也是相当聪明的：曾经的泥、灰尘和凹坑都不见了，取而代之的是整洁的柏油路、统一的标识和低档的车位锁。不同于中国（或任何地方）近期绅士化的城市区域，798里并没有充斥着财富、休闲和生活方式的标志——**比如星巴克，麦当劳等等。这些“缺席”反而让人耳目一新**，让798有了一种小规模的城市感，又没有典型的常规感。

798的租户也发生了翻天覆地的变化。在曾经的短时间内它是一群艺术家的聚居地；而今，只有屈指可数的艺术家住在里边。那些现在居住在远处的艺术家仍经常出现在798工厂区域，向收藏爱好者展示他们因798而被赋予传奇魅力的二级工作室。这边的商店、餐馆和咖啡馆也成倍增加，附近奥迪和奇虎360总部的那些西装革履的工作人员经常会带来光顾。

当年的798和如今的798之间最明显的差异在于游客的数量和类型。由于无数旅游指南、城市杂志和专业艺术出版物的宣传，如今往来这个曾经的工厂区的已不再仅限于业内人士或内行的收藏家；似乎人人都知道798，包括来自国内外的游客，以及推着婴儿车、轮椅或遛着狗的北京本地人。最引人注目的是现在的年轻女性提着的精致又相对另类的婚纱裙，拖着满脸无奈的新郎。小夫妻选择798作为婚礼照片的背景似乎意义重大，不论这是出于傲娇或是对时尚的好奇心，他们的存在都是积极正面的。

所有的这些变化表明798精神、实质和功能的根本性转变。最初只是想要找第一块用以发展中国当代艺术的空间——如同先驱旗手一般——但在此之后798的职责发生了变化。它不再有那么紧迫的使命感，仿佛这个地方的热情已被扑灭。虽然798本质上可能从来不是一种意识形态，它的社区还是因为一个目标统一在一起，这个目标即生存。现在由于各级政府强有力的支持，这种紧迫感几乎消失了。当然，画廊、机构和艺术家继续面临压力，租金上涨、短期合同或市场转移都是他们所面临的问题。尽管如此，如今798的治理状态使现在的人们比早期的居住者有了更多的安全保障。

虽然人们不再为了烧烤和啤酒而聚集在街角，但在很大程度上，798的核心社区依然存在。那些年长且不那么热心的人，也许没有紧密联系在一起。它们显然都是富裕群体，但依然组成了一个松散的网络，经常会去**罗伯特·伯纳尔**的东八时区咖啡馆里点咖啡和三明治。他们的存在被周围无数涌进的人群稀释，人们穿着西服、节日盛装或制服，每个都有自己的议程和目的，而这些目的都与798最早期愿景相差甚远。然而，如果798始创精神和热情遭受抑

fundamental significance on Chinese contemporary art. Moreover, the fact that its credence has become so entwined with popular culture, its myths and legends may even have contributed to its survival. Let us not forget that for all its hyperbole and currency, contemporary art – at its most political and groundbreaking – is still negotiating its footing in China. 798 goes some way to paving that path. What's open for discussion is how future incarnations of this most enduring of art districts could learn from and ultimately push a creative agenda for China.

Ma Shuqing  
26 July / Ma's Studio

*As someone who has witnessed more than a decade of change at 798, do you think we should be concerned at the district's increased commercialization? Or, now that art in China has found its footing, at least compared to the status of art and artists back in the early 2000s, does it matter if 798 sacrifices some of its artistic integrity? Does it still need to be an artistic space?*

It will be and should be, because there's **no alternative space in China** with such a concentration of artistic production and commercial possibilities. Of course, you have Songzhuang, you have Hei Qiao but they're mainly studios, there are not many galleries there. So we need a place to kind of fly the flag, a center for Chinese art, also because the Chinese art market is going up now so we do need a space, we do need a place like 798. There's no doubt. The only problem is, how do we keep and reinforce this image as a center of art?

*What in your opinion are the biggest threats to 798 in maintaining its position as 'a center of art'?*

One thing that needs to happen is an improvement in the quality of the visitors, by which I mean those people here doing wedding pictures, buying cheap stuff and so on. Moreover, how can we stabilize the rent and make artists and galleries feel more secure? With prices rising year-on-year, it's very difficult for anyone to plan ahead. Red Town and M50 in Shanghai are slightly different: their rent is really high so they're mostly occupied by design studios. It's not like Beijing.

But the absolute worst thing of all to happen to 798 would be if these big institutes left, because then it wouldn't do tourism any good either.

*But in spite of these changes, threats and possibilities, you'll continue to stay here?*

For artists it's very important that you do your work in a familiar environment. My work is very much related to my space, which of course was built by me. They become one. This kind of familiarity is very important for my artistic creation.

Yes, there are a lot of dodgy galleries in 798, but you see that they're not doing good business. It's not like seven or eight years ago when anyone could come here and make money. What happens is that the galleries that don't sell transform their business model to start selling art-related products to get some money back – postcards, souvenirs, t-shirts, that kind of thing.

But at least now there are more galleries, and so more diversity. It's positive, and definitely something required by the market.

Philip Tinari  
24 July / Timezone 8

*To what extent did 798's emergence – that short-lived period of community and solidarity in the face of imminent expulsion experienced in the early 2000s – shape what was being created here? Does the influence of that time continue?*

I guess it influenced the kinds of exhibitions that got made – there was always this idea of if not a free for all, then a haven for art and artistic expression inside the city. I don't know that it was specific to the level of particular aesthetic programs, but on the level of art standing for something beyond art, then yes, definitely.

*But right after that initial period of uncertainty, 798's influence seemed to change direction. It seemed to become more outward-facing, more about Beijing's residents, tourists and public profile, as opposed to that earlier introspection that shaped its production and creativity...*

That's true: people now **come here for an urban experience rather than for art**. I mean look around – it's really about somewhere on a pedestrian scale where you can create an orbit for yourself, punctuate that with a coffee, you can bring a stroller. That's 100% true, and there are not many places in Beijing where that happens.

制, 而改变又不得不发生的话, 那么就不能认为现在的新步伐是停滞不前的。

这一切意味着什么? 有什么是曾经的798遗留下来的吗? 如果没有的话, 有关系吗? 总的来说, 过去14年的变化中, 798的损失超过所得了吗? 如果现在是798重生, 那么现阶段——苦心孤诣地去平衡高端艺术和主流娱乐又将会留下什么? 这是平衡所付出的代价吗?

无论这个地区的未来如何, 它的浪漫背景故事似乎将继续存在。当然, 它有一些重要的功能。懂行的艺术家 (尽管他们现在生活在别处) 在798保留工作室的背后其实是别有用心: 这对收藏家是有增益的, 他们热衷购买藏品, 其实也购入了21世纪中国当代艺术史的传说、争议和真实性, 而这一切也都会给艺术品赋值。这一行为关系到了798的意义、功能和遗产。

不能说文化空乏, 但中国的动荡的20世纪呈现出了一个创造力相对匮乏的景象。持续近30年时间, 艺术话语呈现缄默、发育不良和暂停的景象, 肇始是新成立的中华人民共和国有其它更紧迫的问题。当那些紧迫问题缓和后, 艺术大跨步地向前发展, 不仅是弥补了裂隙——这要归功于当时的艺术先驱们如**王克平**、**毛栗子**、**黄锐**。但也许, 即使到2001年中国现代和当代艺术还没有赶上国家发展速度? 也许它仍然需要故事、灵魂人物和仪式以推动改革开放后的创新巨浪? 798的及时出现给了中国艺术迅速发展所急需的框架和载体, 它扎根于中国的艺术界, 为收藏家和艺术爱好者提供了有形的现实空间来理解和把握艺术。

艺术家聚集在一起, 虽然他们的运作方式偏个体而非集体, 但进一步地加速了艺术发展的过程。这个羽翼未丰的艺术社区, 自我设定好了角色, 快速地创建了体系和网络, 使得中国步入国际舞台——并且还将持续这种狂飙之势。作为传播中国当代艺术的总部、陈列室或“震中”, 798达到了它的目的。它创造了一股势头, 最重要的是创建了一个吸引艺术家注意的社区, 它所铺平的道路不仅通往21世纪初期到中期的国际艺术品市场, 而且通往各类展会如在亚洲协会、旧金山现代艺术博物馆的“来自身体内部”, 及之后伦敦V&A博物馆的“中国设计进行时”。简而言之, 798将中国艺术坚定地扩展在世界版图上。

那么现在呢? 如果798已经达到它成立时的目的——为艺术家提供住所, 吸引他们注意, 让世界为之惊艳——那它现在是否多余? 除了娱乐那些拿着旅行指南的游客和提供一个“前卫”婚纱照背景, 它还有其它有用的功能吗? 尤伦斯当代艺术中心、佩斯画廊、长征画廊等提供的批判性信息, 是否真能证实其言论的“爆炸性”——单调乏味正对798造成侵吞之势? 这个地方是否已被弱化为仅仅是受大众欢迎的建筑物? 如果是这样, 如今中国当代艺术的核心又在哪里? 文化——包括其生产和表现——与十年前相比越来越去中心化, 然而, 798似乎已留存了“名誉领袖”的名声。

值得讨论的是, 尽管其热情因那些平淡无奇的艺术画廊, 众多的供应商和婚礼摄影师而逐渐稀释, 798仍然对中国当代艺术有着根本性的意义。此外, 流行文化与其交织, 它的神话和传说甚至有助于其生存。我们不要忘记, 在奢侈798重要性和流通艺术品功能的背景之前, 是中国当代艺术——其最具政治性和开创性的部分——仍在亦步亦趋地妥协中, 试着站稳脚跟的现实。798在一定程度上铺平了这条道路。未来, 人们可以从这片化身“最持久的艺术区”借鉴到什么, 且最终推动中国创新议程。

*作为一个见证了798十几年变化的人, 你认为我们应该关注该区域不断加重的商业化吗? 或者, 至少相对于21世纪初艺术家和艺术家的地位, 现在艺术在中国已经找到立足点, 798牺牲它的艺术完整性是否可行? 它是否还需要作为一个艺术空间?*

它会这样也应该这样, 因为在**中国没有其它地方有这样——一个艺术空间聚集着如此的艺术生产和商业机会**。当然, 还有宋庄、栗桥, 但那里主要是工作室, 画廊不多。所以我们需要一个彰显“旗帜”的地方作为中国艺术的中心。也因为中国艺术品市场现在不断发展, 我们需要一个空间, 一个像798这样的地方。这是毫无疑问的。唯一的问题是我们如何保持和加强这一艺术中心的形象。

*你认为什么是798保持艺术中心地位的最大威胁?*

必须注意的一方面是, 改善游客质量, 我指的是那些来拍婚礼照片, 购买廉价商品等的游客。此外, 如何稳定租金, 让艺术家和画廊更有安全感? 租金价格同比上涨(水涨船高), 任何人

And these visitors, all these tour groups, they may not know exactly why they're here, but the word 'contemporary' probably has something to do with it. There's something of the future here.

Does that mean 798 still has a bearing on art in China and internationally? Is it still relevant?

You mean what this place means for high art for the art world? Part of it is like an industry park or incubator, so in addition to these galleries you have quite a number of related fields – art media people have offices here, for example. More importantly it stays very central – it never feels far away, it never feels a difficult place to ask people to come. That's entirely because of its position in the city. You could draw a radius around it that would encompass CAFA to the west; and that would encompass Caochangdi which is a different urban condition but in the end a similar mix. It would encompass Hei Qiao, the whole Lido area, it would encompass the Upper East Side which is where many of the more successful artists choose to live....

So part of its relevance and by extension, legacy, comes from its positioning, its centrality?

Yes. If you it compare to Shanghai where you have artistic pockets and clusters dispersed over a wide range of the urban topography, it's kind of remarkable. 798 is the beachhead of contemporary art in the city, it's the place that stands for art, the place that represents art and the urban imaginary. That's why it continues to exist.

Are you suggesting that 798's contemporary significance is only figurative? Are the two worlds, the 'urban imaginary' that you mention and the actual industry of art, now independent of each other?

They're irrelevant to each other. These are the kinds of galleries, they don't sell to walk-in customers; they're in the Basel or Freize system. You look at these five or seven galleries, they're selling off of JPEGs that they email around the world. It has nothing to do with here. OK, it's nice when people come and they have a place to go...

So in that sense, 798 still has a role to play in the wider ecology of art, its systems?

Yes, it's an urban ecology. You can flick through a city magazine and it will list the places you can go. There's kind of a middle ground, [a majority of visitors to 798 are] not consumers of art objects but they're consumers of culture who would read Time Out and come and see what's going on.

How has the role of UCCA developed in this kind of ecology, this situation?

Since its founding, UCCA has adhered to several core principles. Specifically, they are: not selling the work that we show; not renting the space out for exhibitions; and putting a lot of effort into cultivating a very broad public for everything that we do, both in the city and globally.

The Ullens family has been absurdly generous, and also unwavering in their faith in what we're all doing here. If we all left there would be nothing, it would fall apart. It's a rented space, there's nothing there. Before, there was no existing model anywhere in China for somewhere like UCCA, in terms of policy of setting something up, there was nothing. In positioning it in 798 they were taking an insane risk because when they took the place and started the renovation it hadn't really been green-lighted by the government.

Is there a curatorial mission?

It's always been this idea of putting Chinese art in an international context and vice-versa. We showcase the range of contemporary creativity throughout society. As a secondary mission, our public program arm cultivates different kinds of conservations around related fields – film, design, there's an educational aspect, a cultural exchange aspect.

They're all goals that you execute well. In terms of the educational element in particular, do you see that as something unique to private museums, something that public institutions can't fulfil?

On some level, I almost resist the idea of us as a private museum – I mean, of course we are, we're privately-owned and operated – but a so-called public museum in China is actually a party museum. We are privately-owned but utterly publicly-facing. Because most of our shows comprise works loaned

都很难未雨绸缪。上海的红坊 (Red Town) 和M50略有不同: 由于房租非常高, 所以大多是设计工作室, 它们不像北京。

但对798来说, 这些大机构一旦撤离绝对是件糟糕的事情, 因为那样对旅游业无助益。

尽管有这些变化, 威胁和可能性, 你会继续呆在这里吗?

对于艺术家来说, 在一个熟悉的环境中工作是非常重要的。我的工作跟我的空间息息相关, 它是我一手创办的。他们成为一个整体。这种熟悉对我的艺术创作是非常重要的。

798的确有很多垃圾画廊。但你看他们生意并不好。不像七、八年前, 任何人都可以来这里赚钱。现在的状况是那些生意不好的画廊改变了他们的商业模式, 为了回本他们开始出售艺术周边产品——明信片、纪念品、T恤等等这一类东西。

但至少现在有更多的画廊, 所以有了多样性。这是积极的, 绝对是市场需求。

随着21世纪初798的崛起, 短暂的艺术社区时期和面对驱逐而团结起来的经验, 这在多大程度上形塑了今天的一切? 那段时间的影响还在继续吗?

我猜它影响了这里的各种展览, 就算不是全部免费的。它是艺术的天堂, 也是这个城市内部去进行艺术表现的天堂。我不知道你所说的影响是不是特指艺术审美范畴, 在“立足艺术表现, 超越艺术”的层面, 是的, 当然。

但初期的不确定性过后, 798的影响似乎改变了方向。它似乎变得更加外放, 更多的北京人、游客和公众形象, 而不是早些时候那种着眼于艺术生产和创造力的自省形象……

这是真的: 现在人们为了一种城市体验而不是为了艺术而来。我的意思是, 四下看看——在步行范围内, 你可以为自己设计一个路线, 在咖啡厅停下来, 还可以推一辆婴儿车。这是百分之百真实的, 北京没有几个地方拥有这样的城市生活。这些游客, 还有这些旅游团, 他们可能不知道为什么来这里, 但“当代”这个词还是和他们沾上了关系。这里, 有一些东西, 关于未来。

这是否意味着798在中国和国际上仍有艺术影响? 他们还有关联吗?

你的意思是这个地方对高雅艺术圈意味着什么? 部分来说它像一个工业园区或孵化器, 所以除了这些画廊这里还有相当多的相关领域, 例如艺术媒体人办公室。更重要的是它处于城市非常中心的位置——它从来没有让人感觉遥远, 它不是一个让人觉得过来有困难的地方。这完全是因为它的区位。你可以画一个半径周围, 包括西边的中央美院、草场地, 这是一个有不同的城市条件但最终互相混合的地区。它还包含黑桥以及整个丽都区域, 包含许多成功艺术家选择居住的“上东区”……

所以之所以和艺术相关, 部分原因还来自于它的中心地理位置?

是的。相比上海那种艺术群体散落在广阔城市中的形态, 这里非常引人注目。798是城市当代艺术的前滩, 此地代表着艺术, 是艺术表现和城市想象场地。这就是为什么它继续还存在着。

你认为798年的当代意义只是形象上的吗? 你提到的“城市想象”和实际艺术产业, 现在是相互独立的两个概念吗?

他们与彼此无关。这些类型的画廊, 他们不卖给无预约的客户, 而是使用巴塞尔艺博会或弗里泽艺术博览会的经营系统。你看看这些七大姑八大姨的画廊, 他们出售jpeg文件, 通过电子邮件发向全世界。它与这里无关。好吧, 当人们来了他们有一个去处也挺好的……

所以在这个意义上, 在更广泛的艺术系统里, 798仍然在扮演角色?

是的, 这是一个城市的生态环境。你可以浏览城市杂志, 它将列出你可以去的地方。如今有一个中间立场 (大多数798的游客) 并不是艺术品消费者而是文化消费者, 他们会阅读《消费导刊》, 然后来看看发生了什么。

UCCA在这样的生态环境, 目前这样的情况下, 它的发展如何?

自成立以来, UCCA坚持几个核心原则。具体地说它们是: 不销售我们展示的作品, 不将空

田霏宇

7月24日

东八时区

城市 = 博物馆

from collections other than the **Ullens'**, we're essentially a museum without a collection, we're a Kunsthalle.

*A rented space, with no art of your own on display here – so all you have is people and ideas?*

It's **like owning a mental space!** And yet, at the same time, being in 798 is 100% essential to the whole thing because if we weren't here no one would come, we'd have nowhere near the same visitor numbers.

For all this talk of a museum boom in China, so few of them have sustainable models... We're pioneering one set of possibilities that could be relevant to others in the future and I think there's absolutely a role for that. If you think of how we interact with the people who come through the door we're not trying to convey a particular political ideology, nor are we looking at you as a potential customer, so it's neither governmental nor commercial. In that sense it's extremely rare. **Private museums in China have a huge role to play** because they're tolerated and at the same time, not actively committed to propagating a state discourse.

*You touched on how 798's positioning is crucial to UCCA in terms of visitor figures. But isn't it a two-edged sword? Arguably, hasn't that popularity amongst shall we say more casual consumers of culture diluted some of 798's artistic integrity?*

It's also worth mentioning that we're getting the subway 500 meters from here next year. That's going to be a game changer that could increase our visitor numbers in the region of 50%. People talk about [the fact] that it's overly commercialized, but the problem is that it's commercialized in such a cheap way. Even high-end retail would be better than some of stuff we have here now, like concept flagship stores – like the Balenciaga or Comme Des Garçons stores in SOHO. I'm not anti-commercial; I just don't want to see shitty trinket shops everywhere.

*Some CAFA students did a survey recently and found that for lots of people, this messy quality is a reason to come here – to buy trinkets, cheap coffee...*

But look around – there's no Starbucks – the rent conditions and leases don't pass muster with any kind of international, big corporate entity. That's interesting, it's as if there's a trade barrier that keeps out big capital, big business. It's a downfall and a salvation. But at the same time, what you don't then have are independent retailers thriving inside a space that's created. That's a bigger problem.

*A way to stem the flood of this cheap commercialization you mention could be to reintroduce production. But in lieu of a 'leader' figure like Huang Rui, or the perhaps too financially-motivated Seven-Star Group, who would do that?*

I agree: there should be more production here. You need someone to get in front of the government and say it should me to curate because they don't have anyone better.

*What is the overall legacy of 798? What enduring influence did it have on Chinese contemporary art?*

A few individual exhibitions may have left a footprint but this is not the way to think about it, I think it's more the idea of a cluster of artists occupying physical space. Artists and art entities participated critically in the discursive establishment of a public sphere or public context for contemporary art in China. Basically the bigger meta-transition is from experimental art in the basement, to contemporary art in full view, which is to say from a group of insiders who all know each other to a cultural sector that's part of a bigger ecology. I think that 798 was really fundamental in that – not just in Beijing but also in all of China. It's not necessarily that the artists wanted this for themselves, but they were given this space and they claimed it and that allowed art to become visible.

间外租做展览, 并且在北京乃至全球投注大量精力于培育公众艺术。尤伦斯家族真的十分慷慨, 对于我们在这里做什么有着坚定的信念。如果我们都离开, 这里就会崩溃。这是一个租赁空间, 什么也没有。此前, 中国现存的模式无一适合UCCA, 在政策设置方面什么都没设。落地798对于他们实际上是非常冒险的, 他们着手改造时, 政府都没有给他“开绿灯”。

*有没有策展任务?*

我们一直有想法将中国艺术置于在国际背景下, 反之亦然。首先, 我们展示当代社会的创造力边界, 其次我们的公共项目支持和培育不同类型的保护项目, 也围绕相关领域, 如电影、设计, 有教育方面的, 也有文化交流方面的。

*他们都是你执行的目标, 特别是教育元素。你认为这是否是民营美术馆特有而公共机构不能实现的?*

在某种程度上, **我个人拒绝将UCCA视作民营美术馆**——我的意思是, 所谓的公共博物馆在中国实际上是政府管辖的领域。我们是私营的, 但向公众开放。(由于UCCA承诺大部分展览的展品都是外借的) 所以我们本质上是一个没有馆藏的博物馆, 是一个艺术展示馆。

*地方是租来的, 也没有自己的艺术展出, 所以你拥有的是人和想法?*

**好比我们拥有的是一个精神空间!** 与此同时百分百关键的是, 如果不是我们在这里, 798就没有人会来。同样的, 在别处, 我们也无法拥有相同数量的游客。

中国的博物馆热很少有可持续模式……而我们开创了一种可能性, 关涉到未来的其他可能的模式, 这是我们所扮演的角色。我们与前来UCCA的游客交流时, 并不试图传达某一种特定的意识形态, 我们也不将他们视为潜在客户, 我们既不是政府性的, 也不是商业性的。在这个意义上我们是极其罕见的。**民营美术馆在中国有巨大的作用**, 因为它们有包容性, 同时不承担宣传教化的作用。

*你提及了798的位置对于UCCA游客的数量是至关重要的。但是它是不是一把双刃剑? 我们是不是可以说, 受大众欢迎的同时, 休闲文化消费者也稀释了798的艺术完整性?*

是的。同样值得一提的是, 明年地铁出站口离我们只有500米。这将改变游戏规则, 我们在这边的游客数量可能会增加50%。人们谈论(事实上也是)过度商业化, 但问题是它在如此廉价的方式下商业化。甚至一些高端零售店也比UCCA的有些东西要好, 像概念旗舰店——例如巴黎世家或如SOHO的Comme Des Garçons店。我不是反对商业; 我只是不想看到到处都是低劣的小饰品店。

一些中央美院学生最近进行了一项调查, 发现对很多人来说, 这种混乱的质量是来这里的一个理由——来买小饰品, 喝廉价咖啡……但看看周围, 这里没有星巴克——租金和租赁条件不过关, 使得这里没有任何形式的国际大公司实体。这很有趣, 就好像有一个贸易壁垒, 使大资本、大生意被挡在外。这是一场垮台, 也是一场救赎。但发展的同时没有创建供独立的零售商蓬勃发展的内部空间, 这是一个更大的问题。

*你提到阻止这种廉价商业化的洪水, 一个办法是恢复艺术创作。但是除了“领袖”人物黄锐, 或者出于经济动机外的“七星集团”, 谁还会那样做?*

我同意, 这里应该有更多的艺术创作。需要有人在政府面前说, 应该让我来(策划)。因为他们没有更好的人选了。

*798的遗产是什么? 它对当代艺术的持久影响有哪些?*

一些个人展览可能留下了痕迹, 但这不是应该思考的方向。我认为最重要的是让一群艺术家聚居在一起, 占用一片实际空间。艺术家和艺术机构参与了中国当代艺术公共领域和公共环境的话语建构。从根本上说, 更大的“元转变”是地下室的实验艺术上升为公众视野下的当代艺术。这就意味着, 艺术包括从小撮互知彼此的艺术家, 到更大生态的文化部门, 从一个封闭的圈子到大的生态系统的文化部分。我认为798的确是一个基础——不只是对于北京, 而是对于整个中国。艺术家们不一定自己想要这样, 但是他们被给予了这个空间, 他们认可它, 而它也使艺术变得可见。