

Q: Yi Hong

A: Ding Shiwei

Translation / ChatGPT

1. From your four major project series, it can be observed that each project resembles a tree: from a central trunk, dense branches proliferate. The thinking and methodology behind the works resemble a systems-theory approach—deriving the second from the first, abstracting a third from the second, extracting multiple sub-projects from a main project. Through a rigorous, almost scientific process, you dissect, evolve, interconnect, and fuse different materials and media, forming a composite body of works. How did this rational mode of creation, starting from a single concept, first begin?

Everything has been quite natural. My projects unfold like peeling an onion. In this process of peeling, I must employ diverse methods, media, and modes of thinking to achieve my purpose. When I finally sense that it is enough, the project reveals itself in its present form.

2. Your four series *Utopia* (乌托邦), *Meteor Sonata* (陨歌), *What Talk About When We Talk About Sea Horizon & Moon* (元), and *The Last Crazy* (最后的疯狂) discuss humanity's ideals, harm, power, control, life, death, time, consciousness, memory—fundamental and vast philosophical subjects. Why do you focus on such ultimate concepts?

I think it stems from a habit of thought—seeing the essence of things through their phenomena. The world presents countless surfaces, but I wish to discover the deeper logic beneath them. At the same time, I am also investigating myself. For example, across many projects, recurring elements such as circles, vortices, and blackness constantly reappear. They make me curious about the relationship between these materials and my own spiritual disposition. While observing the object, I am also attending to myself; the two stand in a relation that alternates between intersection and parallelism.

I am drawn to the primal state of the world or of things. When interested in interpersonal relations, I trace them back to the root weaknesses of human nature. When studying matter and time, I consider the role humans play within them. When fascinated by elements such as the sea level, the square, the moon, or the circle, I imagine connections between humanity's original consciousness and memory and modern experience. Whether intentionally or not, my way of seeing always relates to “the human” and to spacetime.

3. Your artistic practice spans video installation, painting installation, photography, video art, and animation. You experiment with a wide range of media and materials, balancing manual techniques and digital post-production. This requires an artist to possess comprehensive literacy—understanding the properties of different tools and materials, committing large amounts of time to mechanical production, collecting materials, and developing concepts. How do you respond to the diversity of methods in your practice?

I maintain curiosity toward all modes of making and believe each carries its own unique charm. In the process, I always seek the most precise form of expression—deriving it from the inner core of the work itself. Sometimes I lead the work toward its form and direction; at other times, the work guides me intuitively.

I also remain open to collaboration across disciplines. In recent years, I have collaborated with the sound artist Guo Yaoxian (Mabonona) on sonic projects; with LeTu Film Studio in Hangzhou and George in Shanghai on photography and mounting; with the fashion label FMACM on crossover projects; with Yingjue Culture and my friend Chen Yanxi on the documentation of works and exhibitions; and I will soon collaborate with

Feibai Studio in Hangzhou on graphic design. Working with outstanding individuals or teams from different fields generates many collisions, elevates the quality of my projects, and often provides inspiration.

4. You once had your own studio team. Does this mean your primary role is to conceive the framework of the works while their concrete realization is delegated to the team?

Between 2014 and 2016, I worked with a relatively stable studio team. Since last year, however, I have been working independently. For certain projects, I temporarily assemble a team. The conceptual framework is always my most important responsibility, and I personally execute production within media such as animation, painting, and installation. In areas where I lack expertise, I use the concept as the guiding thread, working through effective communication and rounds of revision with a team (or temporary team) to complete those aspects.

5. Your project documentation includes “a group of hand-drawn concept diagrams.” These diagrams are rigorous, precise, and systematized, resembling scientific illustrations. Usually, hand-drawn sketches are more casual—like Duchamp’s Green Box, a collection of drafts and recorded ideas. Yet your careful treatment of concept diagrams demonstrates a kind of rational beauty. Is this a personal preference, or a premeditated design language?

In the early stages of my work, the memo app on my phone plays a larger role, usually recording ideas in text form—keywords and short phrases. In the middle stages, the process sometimes involves repetitive labor or multi-media experimentation. By the mid-to-late stage, I set aside time to summarize, reorganize, and refine these records into illustrated concept diagrams. Through this, I hope to transform chaotic text and mechanical repetition into something more precise and rationally diagrammed.

Because my projects often span long durations, this reorganizing process not only allows me to recover forgotten ideas but also sparks new concepts for future projects.

6. Your work *Jie* (结)—an abstract geometric piece printed on sulfuric paper by laser—incorporates invisible thought patterns into the system of the artwork, materialized as visual abstraction.

As you described: “In recent years, for each project I create a set of works that traces the logic and thought patterns of the project. They remain abstract, diagrammatic, and parallel to the other works. This approach not only offers viewers another way to understand the exhibition and my thinking, but also helps me organize my own ideas. Within this process, multiple new possibilities emerge. These possibilities extend my thought and become hidden tentacles for future projects.”

7. In some sense, your mode of thinking aligns more closely with philosophy, while your method resembles scientific experimentation. Typically, mapping out creative logic is the task of art historians, critics, or curators. Yet as an artist, you also assume this role, turning self-analysis into material for the work. Do you see this as a distinguishing characteristic of your practice?

My work only represents myself and cannot replace the work of others. I trust that art historians, critics, and curators will each form their own distinct interpretations. My self-mapping provides only a path with a certain sense of chaos, offering general orientation. It is my way of loosely controlling the trajectory of the project.