Q: Liu Ziyu, ArtPDF
A: Ding Shiwei

Translation / ChatGPT

"Of all the things I have encountered in my work and life over the past few years, what fascinates me most is technopolitics and its impact on individuals. I often experience a sensation of falling at an accelerating speed. How is it possible that, in such a short period before and after the pandemic, we have entered this state of accelerated descent? When I talk to people, I sense that we share a fragile consensus. Since I can feel it myself, I believe many others who have lived through similar experiences must also be reflecting on the same questions. What matters is finding an appropriate way to bring these questions to the surface and distill that shared understanding."
— Ding Shiwei

Our conversation with Ding Shiwei ranged from his early artistic practice to his recent exhibitions, touching on the methodology of "Basic Vision," the imagination of media, and multidimensional ways of seeing, as well as news, music, and typography. Like Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, he attempts to turn abruptly toward the past and gaze into history, while remaining acutely attuned to the currents of contemporary technological society. He ventures into virtual spaces to imagine the biological nature of technology, allowing intuition to stir thought and reinterpret reality.

1. How have your experiences at the China Academy of Art and living in Hangzhou influenced your artistic practice?

I studied under Zhang Peili and Geng Jianyi during my postgraduate years. At the time, our studio was called the "Basic Vision Research Institute," where we explored how to think about everything within the realm of the visual. I regarded "media" as an object of study within "Basic Vision."
Today, viewers increasingly experience the world through media interfaces rather than relying entirely on their own eyes. To me, this development represents a clear progression. As a result, almost all of my work since 2019 has revolved around the idea of the screen as a medium.
Before 2020, I often joked that I was an artist concerned with eternity. Living in Hangzhou, it is difficult not to develop such a sensibility. Looking at the distant mountains outside my studio or at the Fuchun River, I would imagine the scenes that poets and artists had encountered and depicted over the past thousand years. It felt entirely natural to enter a historical perspective shaped by a sense of eternity.
But after 2020, with the outbreak of COVID-19, that seemingly solid conception of time suddenly shattered, giving way to an urgent state of exception. My practice also shifted toward a much closer engagement with the present.
At that moment, discussing eternity seemed inappropriate. I could no longer move freely through the world to experience that sense of timelessness. Instead, I was confined to my room, participating in a cyber plaza through my smartphone.
This led to the concept of the "Dimension-Reduced Plaza" in my 2020 solo exhibition, which explored how our three-dimensional physical bodies were reduced to two-dimensional screens, and how people participated in political expression within that condition.

2. People are gradually forgetting that period, but through my interviews with artists, I have found that the pandemic marked a turning point for many creators. Everyone seems to be finding their own way to remember that moment. Do you incorporate anger or other strong emotions into your work?

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I observe people's anger and their reactions.
Apart from the "Dimension-Reduced Plaza," I also created *The Vanishing Prophecy* series during that period. The works simulated the condition of individuals confined to their rooms, sealed off as though inside an aquarium or a laboratory.
At that moment, although I was an observer, I also felt as though I were the one being observed inside the aquarium.

3. In today's thoroughly digitalized world, you continue to produce physical artworks. Is this primarily a technical and aesthetic choice, or is it a deliberate strategy of resistance and an expression of certain values? Would you consider exploring works that exist entirely on virtual platforms?

It is a natural, intuitive choice.
However, I would question the very concept of a "virtual artwork." I believe that anything you experience firsthand or create with your own hands possesses a strong materiality, even if it is purely a moving-image work.
I used to make animations in my early years. A short film lasting four minutes and thirty-nine seconds required me to produce thousands upon thousands of drawings. Although my first artwork, made in 2013, circulated through the digital world, I remember its creation as an extraordinarily long and materially tangible process.
Later, some of my hardware-based works began addressing questions that were increasingly virtual in nature. So, for me, the boundary between the virtual and the physical has never been particularly clear.

4. As an intermedia artist, you have explored animation, moving images, and even generative fiction. What differences do you see between these forms of expression? Do you deliberately seek to engage with the distinct logic of different media?

When it comes to media, what matters most to me is whether a particular medium is appropriate.
My collaboration with AI on a novel took place in 2022. At the time, I was developing eight virtual installations for a new project in 2023. I had just discovered the emergence of a medium like ChatGPT, and my intuition told me that it had the capacity to construct virtual worlds.
I began to wonder whether I could use it to develop a fictional background for those eight installations.
It wasn't a deliberate attempt to introduce multiple media into my practice. Rather, it emerged from a combination of opportunity and intuition.
In 2021, I introduced sculpture into my solo exhibition at Gallery Vacancy. Interestingly, this was inspired quite unexpectedly by my father-in-law.
He was renovating his workspace and had asked a worker to construct a handrail for an existing staircase. The worker wrapped a cylindrical tube, approximately eight centimeters in diameter, in an electric heating blanket and then bent it into shape through heat.
I found the technique fascinating and subsequently adopted the same method within my own conceptual framework.
So I don't reject any medium. My choice of media comes not only from personal interests but also from chance encounters in everyday life.
What I have always pursued is the appropriateness of a medium in relation to what I want to express.

5. Your early exhibition *Faith on Tap* featured several works incorporating the motif of the cross. Why did you consider it the most appropriate visual form at the time? And why were these works relatively small in scale? Both contemporary art and religious art often employ monumental dimensions to create a stronger impact.

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The first work visitors encountered upon entering *Faith on Tap* was Screen Faith, a video installation composed of four screens arranged to form a negative space.
My original intention was to create an installation that combined meditation with a critical perspective. The cross formed by the gaps between the four screens was actually an absence, an empty space without any tangible representation. What you believed in was, in fact, nothing. There was something rather Zen-like about it.
This also emerged from our fascination with screens during the pandemic. I vividly remember how, when people couldn't leave their homes, they would gather for drinks over voice calls and live their lives through screens.
After the pandemic, this relationship with screens extended into generative artificial intelligence, which I think has made the work even more meaningful.
ChatGPT has taken on something resembling the role of a priest. People sit in their rooms, gazing at the glow of their screens and confiding all their uncertainties, as though AI were an omniscient yet remarkably humble creator. The room itself begins to resemble a confessional.
As for the scale, constructing a grand religious narrative was never my intention. I wanted to explore the relationship between humans and media through the familiar dimensions of everyday devices, such as smartphones and iPads.

6. Your works often encourage viewers to approach them closely, as in *Left-Right Montage*, emphasizing the act of human beings gazing into interfaces. At the same time, you reverse the relationship between subject and object, as in *The Trial* and *Circular Interface: Gaze*. Seeing and being seen form a strikingly symmetrical relationship. When creating these works, do you imagine yourself occupying different subjective positions?

This is also connected to the educational background we discussed earlier. It is a methodology rooted in "Basic Vision."
Whenever vision is involved, one inevitably encounters multiple layers of seeing, including the relationships between seeing and being seen within broader social systems.
In my practice, I sometimes place myself in different positions, but I rely more heavily on intuition.
For example, the worm-like installation I created last year originated from a fairly simple intuition.
I imagined my understanding of artificial intelligence over the past two years as an external organism resembling a centipede, wrapped in an industrial shell.
At the same time, this organism was built upon human experience. So I implanted an internal passage into its cavity, simulating human reproduction and digestion, to express how it mimics human experience.
In other words, I was imagining media as a biological organism.
From a distance, viewers might feel that the work is somehow threatening or aggressive. But when they approach and look through its openings, they encounter an internal body that seems to be continuously proliferating.
Perhaps this unconsciously reminds them of their own bodies, awakening a complex sense of empathy.
I believe an artwork always emerges from the convergence of rational and emotional dimensions.
Sometimes this requires a connection. It might come through a medium, a concept, an observation, or a theory.
When these elements suddenly intersect at a particular point, the artwork comes into being.

7. When I find myself being gazed at by those screens, I think of Édouard Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe.* Traditionally, the male viewer outside the frame gazed at the female figure within the painting. But Manet suddenly allowed the nude woman to return the viewer's gaze. Perhaps the screen is today's nude figure. It has endured so many gazes, and in your work, those gazes seem to return with a certain sense of retaliation.

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Human beings have already been drawn into a condition of excessive looking.
In everyday life, whether riding the subway, walking down the street, or even rushing around on electric scooters, people are constantly scrolling through short-video platforms.
I want to uncover these unconscious acts of excessive gazing and amplify them, presenting them back to viewers so that they might become aware of them and begin to question whether there is something problematic about the way we look.

8. In your *Borderman* series, we encounter angry or numb eyes belonging to figures such as technology tycoons, the Buddha, and even yourself. In *Borderman No.3*, Mark Zuckerberg's eyes are filled with tears. Strangely, I sense a kind of compassion toward this privileged figure of the digital world. What emotional intuitions and rational considerations does the eye, as an organ, evoke for you? How do you determine the expressions of these eyes?

Every character in this series is crying.
At the time, Meta had just introduced the concept of the metaverse, encouraging users to participate deeply in virtual life through immersive devices.
Their vision was that people could move freely through virtual spaces and do almost everything they could do in the physical world.
Even today, I still consider this a remarkably ambitious proposition.
Once human consciousness can be digitized, almost everything can potentially be digitized. It would transcend the boundaries of time, space, identity, and physical objects.
But my immediate reaction at the time was this: if every one of us were virtualized within the metaverse, how would these digital backups perceive the physical world?
This is why the paired screens became particularly important. They refer to VR headsets, both as a method of seeing and as an object of artistic investigation.
The fictional premise of the work involves eight seemingly unrelated virtual individuals, each with a different background, who encounter one another in the metaverse.
It is actually a rather conventional narrative, but it belongs to a very specific historical moment.
At the time, I could only begin with the most fundamental acts of imagination.

9. These characters have already entered the virtual world. As digital backups looking back toward the physical world, are they attempting to communicate something to us?

Yes.
The tears are also connected to the fictional setting of the work, which takes place in an apocalyptic landscape engulfed in flames.
I wanted viewers to imagine the circumstances these digitized life forms might be experiencing.
At the same time, the eight screens collectively form a miniature theater, a kind of panopticon, gazing together at viewers in the physical world.

10. You frequently construct smaller circular spaces within exhibition environments. Is this structure a way for you to reactivate the concept of the panopticon?

Since 2020, I have probably created four or five works involving circular structures.
The first was *The Jokers' Revolution No.2*, an installation composed of thirty sets of sensors.
What I wanted viewers to experience was not so much surveillance as a condition of the dimension-reduced body, or a particular form of performative gesture.
This was connected to the real-life events surrounding the death of Dr. Li Wenliang during the pandemic.

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I saw many people treating WeChat as a cyber plaza, expressing their protests through gestures.
The installation therefore employed distance sensors.
When viewers approached within a certain range, a gesture of protest would emerge from the otherwise dark screens. As soon as they moved away, the screens would immediately fall silent.
So in that work, the circular structure represented something closer to an enveloping public square.
The *Borderman* series, on the other hand, explores multiple forms of seeing, including the possibility of seeing across different spatial dimensions.
You could also regard it as my reinterpretation of Foucault's ideas.
The fundamental concern of these works remains the relationship between seeing and being seen.
But within today's changing reality, that relationship continues to acquire new meanings. I try to articulate and give form to these emerging meanings through my work.

11. When we encounter circular structures, we naturally associate them with Foucault's theories. Do you ever worry that such a well-established theoretical framework might overshadow the interpretation of your work?

When I create a work, I tend to set theory aside and focus more on how the installation itself can be engaged with, interacted with, and experienced.
Besides, theories are not static. They remain dynamic and are always connected to their historical contexts. For example, the meaning of "discipline" has undergone further transformations in today's world.
I believe viewers with some theoretical background can also recognize how contemporary conditions reshape and reproduce existing theories. This opens up a much richer space for discussion.

12. Many of your works are produced as series. Is your creative logic to construct a broader conceptual framework through a number of smaller, interconnected arguments?

Over the past five or six years, I have increasingly approached exhibitions as complete units.
It's similar to how I listen to the second album by the Chinese band Omnipotent Youth Society, Inside the *Cable Temple*. It is an exceptionally coherent album, rather than simply a collection of independent songs.
There are connections and narratives between the tracks. Some songs are willing to play supporting roles, while others become the protagonists.
To some extent, I think my practice works in a similar way.
When developing an exhibition, I see myself as someone arranging an overall structure. I summarize my observations from the previous two years into a coherent framework and coordinate different elements to give the exhibition greater depth and complexity.
I want the works to be connected to one another, allowing the exhibition to unfold with a measured rhythm and ultimately take on a form that corresponds to my own aesthetic sensibility.

13. Almost like a complete musical, with an introduction, development, climax, and conclusion. In your recent work, the cartoon-like or "kawaiified" elements that appeared in earlier series, such as *Aesthetic Distance* , have gradually diminished. Your practice seems increasingly less dependent on recognizable symbols. At the time, how did symbols such as emojis function as vehicles of expression? Have they now lost their effectiveness?

I see this as something specific to a particular phase of my practice.
Between 2020 and 2021, I treated "kawaiification" as a distinct artistic approach. This emerged from my observations of the enclosed virtual lives people experienced during those years.
People were attempting to construct themselves as easily recognizable and consumable images, even at the cost of reducing the dimensionality of their bodies and flattening their identities.

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Such recognition depends on symbolic systems, and I saw this as a tendency within digital society.
But I think the situation has changed over the past two years.
With the emergence of generative artificial intelligence, the reduction of user identities and “kawaiification” are no longer the most central or accurate frameworks for understanding our condition.
What has become more fundamental is the delegation of human work to technological agents.
In the art world, any method you continue to rely on will eventually lose its effectiveness.
Artistic concepts must evolve rapidly, identifying and responding to the conditions of the present in a timely manner.
We need to adopt an accelerated perspective in order to understand an accelerating life.

14. To ensure that our work remains relevant to its time, we cannot simply stand by and observe. We have to engage directly with the present.

Exactly.
If you choose to work within contemporary art but fail to evolve quickly, what you produce may become completely disconnected from contemporary society.
If I were still discussing “kawaiification” in 2026, it would feel out of step with the times.
This has become one of the criteria by which I evaluate my own work in recent years.
I want my practice to engage with the social transformations and technological developments of the past two years, while still emerging from genuine personal experience.
Only then can viewers find something in it that resonates with their own experiences.
If a work responds too slowly, audiences may no longer be able to truly understand it.
At most, they might approach it as a small aesthetic curiosity or an amusing visual experience.
To me, that would be a failed artwork.

15. Thank you for sharing that. Your works seem deliberately to leave power supplies, charging cables, driver modules, and other components exposed—the very material infrastructure that sustains the virtual world. Why do you choose to reveal these elements? Do they carry a particular meaning?

It's partly an aesthetic choice. I find these exposed components beautiful in themselves.
Another reason is that contemporary design increasingly tends toward a kind of pornographic smoothness.
I wonder whether we can bring the systems behind that smooth surface into view, allowing these exposed elements to become a form of resistance against an increasingly seamless world.

16. One recurring structure in your installations combines a sculptural form that can be appreciated from a distance with miniature moving images that require close viewing. What attracts you to this combination, both materially and metaphorically?

I want an artwork to possess a sense of energy that becomes more immediate and unfolds progressively as viewers approach it.
Take a recent small exhibition I presented in Shenzhen as an example.
The exhibition took place at The Cargo, a street-facing window space designed by architect Liu Xiaodu.
While developing the project, I had many interactions with people from the local community. They asked me why I had chosen to exhibit Specter's Ventriloquism: Mutation in that particular location.
My answer was that the work needed to be considered from the perspective of space, or more precisely, from the perspective of geographical scale.
Shenzhen is a technology-oriented city, and The Cargo itself resembles a miniature opening within that city.

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This led me to wonder: within a space that is already extremely small and possesses a certain sense of depth, could I introduce an even smaller opening through which viewers might reconsider the surrounding environment?
Although the artwork already existed, its context changes depending on where it is situated.
When it is placed within a technology-driven city, in a location with a strong sense of community, and then embedded within another spatial structure that extends further inward, the viewer's imagination moves progressively across different scales.
It begins at the scale of the city, moves into the scale of a miniature architectural space, and finally reaches the scale of a microscopic screen.
When I think about and imagine my works, I never confine myself to the studio.
Instead, I continually approach them through multiple perspectives of time, space, and scale.
Sometimes this involves spatial dimensions; at other times, it involves the historical perspective we discussed earlier.
I believe that works developed through this progressive movement across multiple dimensions possess greater tension.

17. Your interactive installations depend on public spaces and the participation of viewers. What role does the viewer's body play in your creative process? Do you tend to imagine viewers as individuals or as a collective?

The viewer is both a physical body and a medium.
I always incorporate the viewer into my creative imagination, just as I would imagine other media and objects.
The artist's task is to establish connections and generate chemical reactions between different materials and mediums.
I find it difficult to imagine how I would work if there were no viewers in the world, or whether I would still have the desire to express myself. I'm not sure.

18. I particularly like two of your transparent, crystal-like works, *The Jokers' Revolution No.4* (2019) and *The Vanishing Prophecy No.3* (2021). They seem to express the unknown through purity. Although they appear almost within reach, they have already been solidified into specimens that can no longer be touched. At the same time, their completely smooth surfaces seem to make them part of the very smooth society you seek to critique. How do you understand this contradiction?

Both works were essentially reactions to the post-pandemic condition.
It was a state of being enveloped in smoothness, with no possibility of breaking through.
Your movements depended on scanning a health code. No matter how angry you were, you still had to undergo a throat swab.
The exterior appeared smooth, but beneath it were wounds.
For example, in *The Vanishing Prophecy No.3*, a wounded body displays skin conditions resembling an allergic reaction. You can almost feel the pain through the surface of that skin.
Meanwhile, inside the crystal sphere of *The Jokers' Revolution No.4*, the words "revolution without revolution" appear.
This is itself a paradox, and also a form of critique.
It suggests that although people seem to be making revolutionary statements in the cyber plaza, there is in fact nothing revolutionary about their actions.
They cannot physically step forward. Instead, they can only remain hidden inside a safe crystal sphere.

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19. Your works sometimes directly incorporate theoretical expressions such as “Smoothness Is Discipline,” historically charged phrases like “Join, or Die,” or technological expressions such as “hello.” Why do you consider the direct presentation of these words to be the most appropriate form of expression?

Between roughly 2021 and 2023, I was particularly sensitive to slogans themselves.
For example, my reappropriation of “Join, or Die” originated from a very specific news story.
During the pandemic, an elderly man who did not know how to use a smartphone eventually starved to death in his apartment.
At that moment, the phrase and image of “Join, or Die” immediately came to mind.
It was the first voice that emerged in my head: if you don't join, you must die.
Was I deliberately trying to appropriate it?
Not really. It was more like a connection that was suddenly activated, an extremely powerful intuitive response.
And that feeling seemed impossible to translate into any other form.
So I simply decided to bring it directly into the work.
Of course, the use of text also needs to correspond to the medium.
For “Smoothness Is Discipline,” I used an extremely flexible OLED screen and placed a small fan behind it, allowing the screen to flutter gently.
In this way, the screen itself became a flag.
To me, having a slogan appear on a flag was an almost perfect correspondence between medium and expression.

20. The text appearing on your screens takes different typographic forms, including code-like fonts and the formal typefaces associated with technological products. How do you choose these fonts?

Whenever text is involved, I have to consider the design language most appropriate to it.
We often say that intermedia artists have to be versatile in almost every respect.
You need to know how to create artworks, assemble structures, connect electrical components, handle graphic design, build websites, and produce PDFs.
I update my portfolio PDF every few years, and the choice of typography always needs to correspond to the current state of my practice.
The same applies even more strongly to the artworks themselves.
The Vanishing Prophecy No.1 is a blue-screen display submerged in liquid.
It simulates an AI machine that longs to communicate with its viewers.
When I created the work, it was still the period before large language models became widespread. Therefore, the typography, icons, and the ways in which they appeared were all developed with reference to the visual language of code.
I believe that elements such as typography and graphic design can be extracted from their conventional functions and transformed into potential forms of artistic language, allowing them to serve a narrative more effectively.

21. Beyond its semantic meaning, you repeatedly appropriate the image of the severed snake from the historical allegory “Join, or Die.” What attracts you to this image on a formal level?

Originally, the image represented a particular political condition.
Benjamin Franklin was advocating for the colonies to unite, suggesting that without unity, they would remain fragmented.

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But what I felt most strongly when looking at the image was the extreme pain embodied by the severed snake.
That pain could be translated into the predicament of individuals in contemporary society—a fragmented and invisible form of suffering.
In today's media society, this fragmentation is no longer physical. Instead, it is produced through algorithmic segmentation.
When you scroll through short videos, almost everything you encounter corresponds to your personal interests.
And each of these fragments constitutes a kind of temporary community.
Sometimes an image serves as a reappearance of history. At other times, it becomes an object of purely visual imagination.
I reinterpret and appropriate these images, while trying to avoid direct imitation or overly literal representation.
I would not simply present an actual snake.
What interests me more is finding a contemporary way to make that sense of pain visible.
This might involve discovering new materials, developing a new visual language, or even placing screens at the two severed ends of the snake, replacing the bloody surfaces of the physical body.

22. The algorithmic echo chambers you describe are closely related to your recently concluded solo exhibition *Isothermal Spiral*. Could you explain how your work addresses information cocoons, and introduce the exhibition itself?

In my 2021 exhibition *Faith on Tap*, two installations specifically addressed the phenomenon of information cocoons.
I used polarizing films from screens and attached them to a cursor-shaped CNC metal frame.
Two tracks allowed the cursor to move across the surface.
Images could only be seen within the cursor, while everything outside remained an expanse of white.
It was as though the only things you could see were precisely those you wanted to see.
In my recent solo exhibition *Isothermal Spiral*, when people encounter the word "isothermal," they naturally associate it with the idea of an echo chamber or a group of people sharing the same perspectives.
But what I wanted to emphasize was the "spiral."
It evokes a Hitchcock-like sensation of rapidly falling, or even the movement of a blender.
What I wanted to express is that our experiences today are being constantly mixed, swallowed, and regurgitated.
It is a kind of biological imagination.
All human knowledge and experience are fed into large language models. They digest this information and then excrete it back to us, creating an endless cycle of ingestion and expulsion.
So in this exhibition, I deliberately brought together two seemingly unrelated words.
That is precisely the intention behind the title.
We are simultaneously enclosed within the same temperature and caught in a spiraling process.
At present, human beings seem completely unable to escape this condition.

23. I sometimes feel the same way—that constantly consuming things already chewed over by AI might make us less intelligent. But another thought occurs to me: large language models are fundamentally based on language, so perhaps they should be used more extensively by people working in the humanities and social sciences. Yet in reality, those who seem most adept at using AI are the so-called Silicon Valley tech elites. In the humanities, people appear more inclined to criticize AI than to find an appropriate way to engage with it.

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I feel quite conflicted about this myself.
As both an observer and a critic, my current practice is nevertheless inseparable from AI.
It can rapidly handle complex tasks, such as researching materials and technologies. If you opened my ChatGPT, you would see an astonishing degree of categorization.
AI has even become part of my everyday life.
Every morning, after driving my child to kindergarten, I talk to ChatGPT on the way back because I want to practice my English.
I've been doing this for two years.
I went from being someone who could barely speak English to being able to apply for international artist residencies and participate in interviews in English.
Later this year, I will also undertake a residency at the National Asian Culture Center (ACC) in Gwangju, South Korea.

24. Criticizing AI while simultaneously engaging with it, and gradually finding an appropriate way to use it—that's actually quite encouraging.

I've always felt that the impact of technology, when viewed through the broader historical continuum, is something individuals simply cannot resist.
Think of the impact of photography on painting, the emergence of the internet and its role in the development of internet art, or the arrival of generative large language models.
As a new media artist, I can certainly approach technology as an object of critique, because it has undeniably brought about extremely rapid and negative transformations in our lives.
But at the same time, we should retain a sense of imagination toward technology as a medium.
We need to explore its possibilities, its potential subjectivity, and ways of working with it.
So when I talk to people, I sometimes reveal a particular inclination: we should use AI to make our work more complete and more powerful.
I don't know whether that's a good thing or a bad thing.

25. Is your personal judgment of technology deliberately ambiguous? For example, in *The Trial*, the imagery of Christ's crucifixion suggests both an ethical judgment and an act of deification. Do you believe artists should continually raise questions, or should they provide powerful answers from unexpected perspectives?

My practice is better at raising questions.
Most people's perceptions tend to lag behind the changes taking place around them.
People working in the humanities may be relatively more sensitive to these transformations. They can identify precise concepts and expressions that bring collective experiences into focus at the right moment.
I think this is valuable.
Take the scholar Xiang Biao, for example. He is able to distill the conditions of an era into remarkably precise keywords.
Artists like us work differently. We articulate these conditions through rapid, multidisciplinary forms of presentation.
Our methods are different, but as long as we can give expression to the problems facing society today, that in itself is a meaningful capability.

26. The protesting fists and collapsing flags in your works convey a certain rebellious political character. How do you understand the relationship between technology and politics? Do you believe art can still bring people together around a shared consensus today?

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Consensus is extremely difficult to discuss in the algorithmic age.
Our communities and social groups have become the products of extreme segmentation. What remains is consensus only within very small and specific spheres.
There is a term, "speculative community," which can be translated into Chinese as touji gongtongti (投机共同体) or sibian shequn (思辨社群).
It describes a highly precarious form of community.
I think this represents a new mode of social organization, or a new structure of community, that has become increasingly observable over the past two years.
As for the relationship between technology and politics, I think that discussion may have effectively reached its conclusion after the pandemic.
Because since then, the two have become inseparable.
Whether or not you were allowed to move freely was determined by a simple digital code.
The very structure of that code was already connected to politics.

27. Speaking of health codes, I'm reminded of a collector I know who was previously an executive at Alibaba. Her team was responsible for designing the digital travel code system.

She told me that when they first received the assignment, the entire team was extremely enthusiastic.
They hoped their work would enable the government to identify potential infections quickly and isolate the virus more effectively.
But as the situation developed, things gradually spiraled out of control and departed from their original intentions.
The experience had a profound impact on her values.
After retiring, she began collecting artworks concerned with technology and emerging ethical questions.
This is also why I placed Sam Altman on the cross in *The Trial*.
As someone who opened Pandora's box, is he a creator or a sinner?
Only time will tell.

28. Your explanations of your work are closely intertwined with the artworks themselves. As a viewer, I find these logically structured interpretations very satisfying. But do you ever worry that such detailed explanations might restrict other possible interpretations? And how do you prevent your works from becoming mere visual illustrations of theory?

My approach to art-making is to put the medium first.
The imagination and creative use of media are particularly important to me.
I use all kinds of unusual materials and technologies, such as miniature screens and magnetic levitation devices.
You could say that some of these details have an element of curiosity or fascination with the unusual.
But their primary purpose is to engage the viewer's body before anything else.
The medium is an interface that opens up perception.
Once that interface has been opened, richer forms of shared sensation and empathy can emerge naturally.
At that point, I don't necessarily need to explain very much.
Writing explanations of artworks is not really what I consider my work to be.
But at present, I cannot avoid doing it.
So I use artificial intelligence to help establish connections between the works and their written interpretations.
Even then, the resulting combination cannot fully encompass my actual intentions.
Because what I begin with is intuition, an imagination of media.

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These are things that are extremely difficult to translate completely into language.
That is why face-to-face communication and the experience of encountering an artwork in person remain irreplaceable.

29. Perhaps choosing to become an artist means that what you want to express exceeds the limits of language. You have mentioned Frankenstein-like future species and utopian visions of society. These concepts seem to embody a fundamental duality: on the one hand, they carry an almost naive sense of creativity and hope; on the other, they can give rise to evil, vulnerability, and greed. Is this complexity of human nature something you want to explore through your work?

This is an enduring question in art.
From a somewhat anthropocentric perspective, human beings have always occupied the central position in our understanding of the world, and human nature remains an endlessly complex and multifaceted subject of inquiry.
I think this condition may persist until artificial intelligence becomes a biological entity with a highly developed sense of agency.
But as an artist and an observer, I hope my observations can possess a certain predictive or forward-looking quality.
That is why I want to bring the contradictory biological nature and emerging subjectivity of technology into discussion today.
Technology is not merely a tool.

30. Much of contemporary art today seems to be moving either toward outer space, toward the nonhuman, or into deeply private and personal experiences. Yet your practice attempts to address certain fundamental qualities of humanity on an abstract level, seeking to establish shared understandings through technology, politics, and perception. Why does this remain important to you?

It comes from the limitations of my own experience.
I have never experienced traveling into outer space.
In my work and life over the past few years, what has fascinated me most is technopolitics and its impact on individuals.
I often experience a sensation of falling at an accelerating speed.
How is it possible that, in such a short period before and after the pandemic, we have entered this state of accelerated descent?
When I talk to people, I sense that we share a fragile consensus.
Since I can feel it myself, I believe that many others who have lived through similar experiences must also be reflecting on the same questions.
If we can find an appropriate way to bring these questions to the surface and distill that shared understanding, there will be much that we can communicate and share.
This also connects to intimate personal stories.
Because a bridge can be built between collective understanding and private experience.

31. I share those experiences, so I can understand that feeling. Finally, what kinds of art or cultural works have you been enjoying recently?

Over the past few months, I've been moving house and reorganizing my studio, so I've returned to a very down-to-earth kind of everyday life.

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I've been imagining what my future working environment might look like, how the tables should be assembled, and how they will be used.
I'm a little obsessive about these things.
I want the space and furniture to correspond precisely to my working habits, and I want them to last for a long time.
So I'm never entirely satisfied with buying ready-made furniture. I feel compelled to draw and design everything myself.
At the moment, I seem to have become rather absorbed in this process.
As for cultural experiences, I occasionally listen to music while taking my child to school.
Recently, I've been listening to a Chinese band called Sound Fragment.
My child is only four years old and particularly loves one of their songs, *Song Liushui* (送流水).
There's a line in the lyrics that says something like:
“Flowing water, flowing water... things themselves are God.”

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