

XIAO LU



In terms of what motivates my work, sometimes it's a fragment drawn from life, or something that grabs my attention. It comes from bodily perception, and from nature. When motivation appears it can take the form of excitement, entanglement, passion or courage. It changes with the years and grows with the seasons. My failure in personal relationships prompted an awakening in me. Curiosity prompts me to continually seek to discover myself and get to know the world. Over time my concerns shifted from myself to society, from unconscious and passive resistance to making conscious decisions and letting go. The experience of artistic practice makes me realize that the right to express my own free will is as important to me as the air I breathe. If a project impinges on this I will forsake the opportunity. When I fired a gun into the telephone booth that was my art work *Dialogue* in 1989, I didn't think of myself as a performance artist. At that time, all I wanted to do was to express myself. I remember when I was in the second year of art school, I had a conversation with Maryn Varbanov, the Bulgarian artist who taught at the academy, and I asked him: what is art? His answer was: "It is to use all means to express what you want to express." I am still inspired by his words to this day...

A performance is generally something that can be repeated continuously. In fact, with each performance I have done, I have had some misgivings, and have had the urge to do it again, but then I think, life is actually a performance work, and it is impossible to repeat what you have experienced—the regrets and accidents, excitements and losses. These are all real experiences at certain moments in one's life.



*Tides* was created for the exhibition at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art in Sydney. Because it was a thirty-year retrospective exhibition, the thirty bamboo poles represented the thirty years since the *China/Avant-Garde* exhibition, and my arrival in Australia. When I conceived the work in China, I was thinking that the space at 4A was limited, so I decided to make an outdoor work. From 1989 to 2019, the ups and downs of my life and art have impacted my fate like the tides. The lives of individuals and history are intertwined, just like the performance of *Tides*, you fall down and you get up again, and then you rush towards the depths of the sea, to battle with the treacherous tides of life. Chinese literati painting is known for the depictions of the four gracious plants, also known as the four gentlemen: plum, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum. These plants represent qualities of pride, seclusion, strength, and simple elegance, respectively. Looking back on those thirty years, it is the word “strength” that guided me through many difficult years. Choosing bamboo poles to be inserted on the beach in Sydney has a certain cultural meaning for me. Claire Roberts in conversation online with Xiao Li, 8 November 2021: see the full transcript see <http://en.xiaoluart.com/index.php?c=show&id=81>

For further information on Xiao Lu’s performances, see the text by Lynne Howarth-Gladston/Paul Gladston, ‘Beyond Dialogue: Interpreting Recent Performances by Xiao Lu’, [https://artdesign.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/atoms/files/lynne\\_howarth-gladstonpaul\\_gladston\\_beyond\\_dialogue-interpreting\\_recent\\_performances\\_by\\_xiao\\_lu.pdf](https://artdesign.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/atoms/files/lynne_howarth-gladstonpaul_gladston_beyond_dialogue-interpreting_recent_performances_by_xiao_lu.pdf)











