



# Beyond Dialogue: *Interpreting Recent Performances* by Xiao Lu

Xiao Lu was born in the People's Republic of China in April 1962. Graduating from the prestigious Zhejiang Academy of Fine Art (now the China Academy of Fine Arts) in Hangzhou—where her father was president—in 1984. Xiao Lu is best known for the action often referred to as *Dialogue*, or *The Gunshot Event* in which she fired two shots from an illegally acquired handgun into her own installation (titled *Dialogue*) in the survey exhibition *China/Avant-garde* in Beijing in 1989. Xiao Lu has described *Dialogue/The Gunshot Event* thus; “At about 11:10 am on 5 February 1989, during the opening ceremony of the China/Avant-garde exhibition at the National Art Museum of China, Beijing, being moved by inner psychological needs, I raised a gun and fired two shots at the installation work *Dialogue* where it was set up in the exhibition hall.”<sup>1</sup>

Her participation as the sole ‘shooter’ is confirmed by a video of the action taken from a vantage point overlooking her installation. Xiao Lu and a male artist, Tang Song were detained and questioned by police shortly afterwards. Both had signed a declaration handed to the chief curator of the exhibition, Gao Minglu, who appears not to have known about the action in advance. As Xiao Lu has clarified;

*As parties to the shooting incident on the day of the opening of the ‘China Avant-garde Exhibition’, we consider it a purely artistic incident. We consider that in art, there may be artists with different understandings of society, but as artists we are not interested in politics. We are interested in the values of art as such, and in its social value, and in using the right form with which to create, in order to carry out the process of deepening that understanding.*<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the statement’s claims of a disinterest in politics, *Dialogue/The Gunshot Event* was heavily politicized within the PRC in the immediate aftermath of the Tiananmen Square killings of 4 June 1989, attracting the description as the “first gunshots of Tiananmen”.<sup>3</sup> Shortly after its enactment *Dialogue/The Gunshot Event* was also upheld outside the PRC as a signal moment in the development of contemporary Chinese art, seemingly conforming as it does to Western(ized) post-Enlightenment expectations of dissident artistic intervention on the institutions of art and by association the wider body politic.

More recently, *Dialogue/The Gunshot Event* has been described as the first feminist art work of contemporary China, in part due to an assertion by Xiao Lu first made in 2004, that she is the sole author of the work; a claim that has since attracted opprobrium from the established art world of the PRC as a brazen rewriting of historical fact, evidenced by her and Tang Song's joint statement. (Xiao Lu's declaration is the basis of a novel written by her, titled *Dialogue* which was published in 2010.<sup>4</sup>) It also reflects changing political circumstances within the PRC, which have seen in recent years a shift away from a generalized desire for greater individual freedom after the extreme collectivism of the PRC's Maoist period (Mao Zedong died in 1976) towards specific identarian concerns resonant with those operative in Western(ized) contexts internationally.

The aim of this text is not to enter into further discussion about the contested status of *Dialogue/The Gunshot Event*, whose current significance is now principally a matter of discursive debate rather than of potentially verifiable facts, to which perhaps little might therefore be usefully added beyond an ultimately gestural virtue signalling. Rather, it is to foreground later performance/installation works by Xiao Lu and to interpret them in relation to current conditions of contemporaneity, under which the critical legitimacy of discursive positions divergent from those associated with Western(ized) post-Enlightenment modernity, including discourses related to traditional Chinese aesthetics, have come increasingly to the fore. This is not to dismiss feminist readings of her work entirely out of hand, nor the validity of Xiao Lu's related claiming of authorship, but to acknowledge that in the particular case of *Dialogue/The Gunshot Event* the artist has already (retro)activated the significance of the work in that regard in ways that require no further elaboration.

Further to which, it is important not to conflate this continuing debate in relation to the patriarchal *différend* within the specific context of China with Western(ized) post-Enlightenment feminisms; the latter encompassing structuralist, modernist feminisms that look towards a rationalist sense either of integrated gender equality, or equality as a matter of profound identarian difference, and poststructuralist, postmodernist feminisms that witness the deconstruction of asymmetrical rationalist dialectics.

There is within the PRC a durable anti-imperialism that refuses any straightforward acceptance of Western(ized) modernist and postmodernist feminist discourses. This anti-imperialism extends not only to misplaced governmental assertions of gender equality under "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (the PRC remains an often cruelly patriarchal society), but, in addition, to a distancing among Chinese women artists from any direct alignment with Western(ized) feminisms (and this in spite of a history of translations of feminist concerns as part of Chinese modernity since at least the beginning of the twentieth century). Refused within the PRC is on the one hand what is seen – in the context of a historically non-rationalist Daoist-inflected cultural habitus – as an unduly rationalist view of gender relations, and on the other a deracinating deconstructivism inimical to the specificities of non-rationalist 'Chineseness'.

The unfolding contention over the authorship and significance of *Dialogue/The Gunshot Event* is consequently accompanied by a paradoxical endogenous resistance, both to the authority of a still-patriarchally administered localised social order within the PRC and ostensibly consonant Western(ized) post-Enlightenment conceptions of progressive gender equality perceived as a continuation of Western imperialism. It is therefore necessary to preserve an existing scepticism with regard to contemporary Chinese women's art as being necessarily feminist in nature.<sup>5</sup> There should not, in any event, be a rush to sanctify Xiao Lu as an iconic feminist 'shooter', in part a refracted image perhaps of Valerie Solanis, Andy Warhol's would-be assassin in 1968.

The two works that this text focuses on are the performance *One (Yi)* (2015), and the performance/installation *People (Ren)* (2016), to demonstrate how both interrupt critically on traditional masculinist modes of artistic production associated historically in China with neo-Confucian literati culture through an appropriation of some of the means of traditional literati painting (ink, water, rice paper and silk), in the context of defamiliarizing techniques characteristic of postmodernist, contemporary performance/installation. *One* was performed by Xiao Lu at the Valand Academy of Fine Art, Gothenburg, Sweden on 5 September 2015, utilising a large sheet or sheets of rice paper laid out on the exhibition space floor, water, black ink, a glass bottle and a plastic bucket. She performed the work barefoot, dressed in a white silk shirt and skirt. Video of the performance shows Xiao Lu in a trance-like state during which she pours a mixture of ink and water over herself and the paper under her feet. The enacting of such a trance-like state engenders both perceptual and affective disjuncture (defamiliarization) within herself and her audience. *People* was performed at the Beijing Kirin Contemporary Art Centre on 19 March 2016, with a transparent rectangular acrylic box circa three metres tall, held at its base by a metal/acrylic stand and open-ended at the top, ink, water, plastic buckets and a ladder. Xiao Lu again performed the work barefoot, but dressed this time in a black smock. The video of the performance shows the artist holding up the heavy acrylic box partly filled with ink, pivoted precariously on its base. The initial intention of *People* was for Xiao Lu to support the box with the eventual assistance of audience members to form an ink 'ren' (pinyin for the Chinese character signifying "people"). Unexpectedly, the acrylic box developed a leak, covering the exhibition space floor with ink in a similar manner to the performance *One*.

Both performances have an intentional relationship to traditional Chinese thinking and practice; in particular that associated with Daoist notions of cosmic reciprocity signified by the now internationally recognised *yin-yang* symbol. In a short statement related to *One*, Xiao Lu asserts that "Ink is Yin, water is Yang, Yin and Yang becoming *One* is the Way of the Universe."<sup>6</sup> The writer Wang Huiqin makes a similar connection in relation to *People*;

*The work 'People' continues Xiao Lu's response to the concept of yin and yang. In Eastern philosophy, yin and yang, as the two core elements that make up nature, reinforce and neutralize each other. The opposition and interaction between them contribute to establishing the rules for everything in the universe. With "ink as yin, water as yang", the audience poured water, then ink, into the vessel, indicating the fusion of yin and yang. From the original idea, the Chinese character for "people", written with one stroke to the left and another to the right, represented a kind of constrained condition in a person, a living body, both internally and externally. When the artist tired during the performance, the audience began to participate. Following the theory of yin and yang as a tiny part of nature, the collaboration and interaction represented individuals advancing the shared development of human society. Artist and participants shared the burden of the increasing weight of the liquid, trying to keep "people" balanced. However, the leak unbalanced the relative state unpredictably. In fact, there is an evolutionary basis for everything in the world that yin and yang created, which precisely emphasised that it is also a non-static, dynamic process.<sup>7</sup>*

Of presiding importance to an understanding of Daoism are the related concepts of the *Dao*,<sup>8</sup> *qi*,<sup>9</sup> *yin-yang*,<sup>10</sup> *wu wei*<sup>11</sup> and *ziran*.<sup>12</sup> The *Dao* (literally "way") is a supposedly metaphysical state of oneness that constitutes the origin of all being and the path or, perhaps more accurately, flow of its development over time. As such, the *Dao* is simultaneously ineffable and immanent to

all things. Moreover, it is, as the fundamental manifestation and demonstration of nature, entirely spontaneous. In spite of its status as a fundamental ontological ground, the *Dao* is by no means static. Rather, as something infused with *qi* (literally “breath”) – that is to say, in the context of the Chinese intellectual tradition, a vital cosmological energy involving continual interaction between actuality and potential – the *Dao* always remains open to spontaneous transformation as a condition of cosmic harmony while otherwise remaining, in a non-rational sense, unchanging.

Considered crucial to this interaction are the interdependently opposed abstract states of *yin* and *yang*: that which is turned away from the sun (feminine) and that which is turned towards the sun (masculine), respectively. Dynamic reciprocity between these opposed states, as represented by the famous *taijitu* or *yin-yang* symbol, is seen by Daoism as the active manifestation of *qi*, whereby the cosmos moves cyclically away from and towards fundamental harmony through interaction between actuality and potential (sometimes referred to as “dialectical monism”). *Wu wei* is the concept of spontaneous action in accordance with the *Dao* or way of nature, often referred to somewhat erroneously in English as “non-action”. For Daoism, any non-spontaneous exercising of the individual human will against nature is almost certain to disrupt cosmic harmony leading to unintended and perhaps calamitous results. The wise therefore seek to bring their actions into accordance with the spontaneity of the *Dao* (Nature) through *wu wei*. *Ziran* – used to signify Nature – refers to the natural spontaneity of the *Dao* and the state of non-desiring disinterestedness required by *wu wei*.

Xiao Lu’s use of ink and rice paper also points towards traditional connections between Daoist cosmology and the making of *shan-shui* (literally “mountains and water”) landscape painting as part of Confucian literati culture (the literati [*shi dafu*] served as administrators of the Chinese imperial state for over a millennium, from the Han Dynasty until the founding of Republican China in 1911-12). Characteristic of so-called literati landscape paintings are a number of related visual tropes that supposedly engender feelings of empathetic reciprocity between artist, viewer and depicted subject. Literati painting is distinguished by depictions of the landscape using ink and brush on silk or *Xuan* paper, which organize topographic relations of foreground, mid-ground and background – sometimes referred to as the “three prominences” – not through consistent use of any structured perspectival geometry, but instead combinations of aerial perspective, multiple shifting viewpoints and relative pictorial scale as part of integrated, sometimes highly simplified/abstracted, compositional arrangements of line and tone. As such, literati painting draws on observable qualities of actual landscapes in China<sup>13</sup> to establish a formal interdependence between untouched areas of the paper/silk support, signifying cloud or mist,<sup>14</sup> or intervening atmosphere, and blocks of painterly depiction corresponding to foreground, mid-ground and background. The effect of which is to set up a constant shuttling on the part of the viewer between an awareness of the artificiality/abstractness of picture-making and ‘realistic’ illusory depiction.

This bringing together of formal elements is not considered a means towards objective verisimilitude in accordance with Western cultural expectations.<sup>15</sup> Rather, it is an attempt to express a felt non-rationalist reciprocity between the painter and nature signified by the term *qiyun shendong* (vital energy resonance) – considered since the fifth century as the ruling desideratum of traditional Chinese ink and brush painting – with which viewers might empathize as a matter of resonantly shared aesthetic feeling.

Such thinking also extends to a perceived reciprocity between presence and absence signified by the compound term *xushi*. As the art historian Jason Kuo indicates, when the otherwise distinct terms of *xu* (void, empty, unreal, absent) and *shi* (solid, full, real present) are combined in this linguistic relation “they often refer to the ways in which the artist deals with those things in a poem or painting that are real and present to the reader or viewer (*shi*) and those things that are absent and left to the imagination (*xu*).”<sup>16</sup> As such, “*Xu* and *shi*, like *yin* and *yang* in traditional Chinese philosophy, are two complementary forces, interlocking and mutually interdependent.”<sup>17</sup> References to *xu* and *shi* appear repeatedly in Chinese writing about painting after the sixteenth century, with a more self-conscious usage by artists and writers emerging during the seventeenth century concurrent with early codifications of a specifically literati art by writers, such as Dong Qichang.

Crucially, the literati remained an exclusively male class within a highly patriarchal Confucian society that, in principle, required women to occupy abjectly subaltern positions in relation to their husbands and senior male members of their family, supposedly in support of a harmoniously ordered society. In practice the position of women in imperial China was less rigidly constrained, as the Confucian text *Lessons for Women (Nüjie)*, written by the female Confucian scholar Ban Zhao during the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), the accession of Wu Zetian, China’s only women emperor, to the position of head of the Chinese imperial state during the Tang (618-906), and the supreme power exercised by the Empress Dowager Cixi during the late Qing (1644-1912) attests. Nevertheless, women were for the most part strongly disempowered throughout the history of imperial China. Although expressly excluded from the *shi*, women did contribute historically to the production of paintings, including *shan-shui* landscapes. However, those who did tended to do so as relations of male professional or amateur painters, or as trained courtesans;<sup>18</sup> traces of which can be understood to persist in relation to the work of the early twentieth century modernist painter Pan Yuliang, whose supported status as a concubine enabled her to pursue an international career as an artist.

By encroaching bodily (as an embodied woman) on thinking and practice associated historically with literati painting, Xiao Lu is therefore also presenting a challenge to its traditional masculinist order.<sup>19</sup> This is open to interpretation from the purview of poststructuralist, postmodernist discourses as taking place through artistic defamiliarization techniques, now conventionally considered to inhere as part of post-Fluxus artistic performance, which can be understood to deconstructively negate supposedly authoritative meanings though the productive proliferation and dissemination of others. It is also open to interpretation from the particular purview of traditional Chinese neo-Confucian aesthetics, as both a prolongation and a remotivation of those aesthetics towards a more expansively gendered, culture-specific related practice. This is not to suggest a synthetic dialogic relationship between Western and Chinese aesthetics, nor simply a hybridization of the two after the deconstructive manner of Third Space postcolonialism. It is instead to register inconclusive mutually decolonizing resonances between the non-rationalism of traditional Chinese aesthetics and of poststructuralism, which places each, by turns, in a position of deconstructive *différance* and of dynamic reciprocity with respect to the other.

A comprehensive treatment of the polyvalent resonances in question lies beyond the scope of this text, including a consideration of relationships between other performances staged as part of the international Western(ized) art world which also have an intentional relationship to East Asian aesthetics; for example, the work of Yoko Ono. Rather, this text concentrates on two related lines of interrogation that draw out relationships between Xiao Lu’s performances *One* and *People*, and the

principles of traditional neo-Confucian aesthetics. While maintaining the relative cultural specificity of the principles in question, it will also be argued that an adherence to those principles provides negative-productive ways of rethinking art beyond its traditional patriarchal ordering in China.

Xiao Lu's appropriation and translation of defamiliarization techniques associated internationally with postmodernist, contemporary performance suggest a radical breaking with artistic traditions indigenous to China. It is however possible to identify resonances between the enactment and outcomes of her performances—with their seemingly indiscriminate splattering of ink—and historical accounts of Chinese painting in the literati tradition. During China's Tang Dynasty, artists in Southeast China are reported as having adopted 'wild' techniques. These included the painter known as Ink Wang who would "get drunk then spatter and splash ink onto the silk, then, laughing and singing, stomp on it and smear it with his hands as well as with the brush. He also dipped his hair into the ink and sloped it onto the silk."<sup>20</sup> Also involved was a Mr. Ku, who "would cover the floor with silk, then run round and round emptying ink all over the floor sprinkling colours over it."<sup>21</sup>

The British art historian Michael Sullivan notoriously interpreted these historical accounts as precedents for 'action' paintings produced by Jackson Pollock and others during the twentieth century claiming, without substantive evidence, that 'wild' painting during the Tang "must have been a public performance"<sup>22</sup> (one might assume in ways that echo in Sullivan's mind Hans Namuth's film of Pollock in his studio and, perhaps, film recordings of body paintings orchestrated by Yves Klein). Sullivan also asserted that the two are "moments in time and space that are not linked in any kind of historical continuity. They simply occur, and occur again, in an eternal present."<sup>23</sup> Sullivan's justification for making such a link can be seen as akin to Roger Fry's equally spurious notion of pan-historical/cultural 'significant forms' in its metaphysical sleights of hand. There is no evidence that Pollock had an in-depth knowledge of Chinese ink painting that impacted directly on his work, for example—it is nevertheless possible to discern in Xiao Lu's work practical resonances with the reportedly 'wild' painting of the Tang as a deviation from usually more restrained approaches adopted towards the making of literati painting. This practical resonance is perhaps most keenly felt with regard to her performances, such as *Drunk* (2009), which presented the artist in actual states of alcoholic intoxication. It can, though, also be registered in relation to her other performances, such as *One* and *People*, where seemingly trance-like states are enacted and where an uncontrolled/spontaneous spilling of ink results.

That practical resonance reverberates still further with the Daoist inflection of literati painterly practice. As previously indicated, of principle importance to literati painting is a Daoist sense of spontaneous non-rationalist reciprocity between artists and nature and between artworks and viewers commensurate with *qiyun shendong* and *xushi*. As the art historian Li Zehou explains, in literati painting,

*... the general idea is grasped and the artist's feelings infuse his work. It is not just the realistic portrayal of physical form as perceived directly by the senses. This kind of realism does not produce the kind of direct effect on the sensory organs that Western painting does; it allows the viewer greater freedom of the imagination... as such, it might almost be said to resemble a hallucination.*<sup>24</sup>





In short, there is in relation to literati painting an enacted dissolution of any categorical boundary between subjects and objects, and between perception and imagination. That dissolution of the controlled/controlling self and of the limits of perception is not of merely artistic-symbolic concern. It is sought expressly towards a desired reciprocity of opposites, both cosmically and temporally. As such, it also resonates with Buddhism as another constituent of syncretic neo-Confucianism and in particular Buddhist meditation as a means of suspending subjective desire towards a desired state of enlightenment.

Xiao Lu's own 'wildly' enacted relinquishing of the self in the context of her performances is thus open to interpretation, not as an outright breaking with but a supplement to literati tradition, both practically and intellectually. That relinquishing is, though, made through the performative intervention of a female body, which in the case of *One* becomes a site of painterly inscription. It consequently interrupts the traditional order of literati painting, inhabiting it (illegally) and turning its ruling precepts upon themselves. That order cannot refuse Xiao Lu's intervention therefore without initiating an act of auto-deconstruction. The continuity of Daoist non-rationalism considered key to traditional literati aesthetics, is both upheld and deployed as a means of reflexive criticality. The result is disjunctive rather than entirely transcendental. Xiao Lu's intervention presents a potent critical double-bind practically and intellectually enmeshed with the very object of its criticism.

As the painter Shitao had already recognized as early as the seventeenth century, literati ink and brush painting, and by moral-critical association wider society and culture, are opened up to the continual possibility of change through actions related to *qiyun shendong*. To speak of this definitively as deconstructive is unjustifiably loaded in cultural terms. Nevertheless, what might be seen to be posited through the joint naming of both *différance* and *qiyun shendong* is a shared interactive potential for negative-productive remotivation; as attested by Shitao's recognition of the power "that ignorance bestowed upon an artist, allowing the artist to cultivate him or herself in the freedom of 'ignorance' and thereby transform or renew human art and culture."<sup>25</sup>

To speak of Xiao Lu's art as categorically feminist in its intentions is made profoundly problematic—although her interventions are discernible within the prevailing socio-linguistic contexts of the Chinese and international art worlds as feminine (as bodily signifiers of 'womanness'), they ultimately eschew any definitive gendering in starkly oppositional terms. While her performances can be understood to suspend the historical male domination of literati painting, not through opposition but on its own terms as a matter of the perceived authority of Daoist-Buddhist non-rationality, that suspension also resists any straightforward reversal of gendered roles (a simple substitution of a male artist by a female artist). What persists instead is a spectral manifestation of selves—already implicit to neo-Confucian aesthetics—that shuttles between differing, though uncertainly, bounded and shifting identities. Feminist critique is therefore joined at the loss of defined female identity; the decolonizing arguably recuperated within the context of a persistent patriarchal order. The question arises as to how the work of other Chinese artists, historical or contemporary, might be interpreted in this regard.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Written statement provided by the artist to the authors, 29 May 2018

<sup>2</sup> Xiao Lu, Archibald McKenzie trans, *Dialogue*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010, vii-xv

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Xiao Lu's decision to novelize her claim was made to avoid a legal challenge on the grounds of libel

<sup>5</sup> See Joan Kee, 'What is Feminist about Contemporary Asian Women's Art?', in Joan Kee, Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin eds, *Global Feminisms*, New York NY: Brooklyn Museum, 2007

<sup>6</sup> Artist statement op cit. Xiao Lu's attribution of the qualities of *yin* to ink is entirely conventional. The brush, which applies the ink as part of the traditional technique of Chinese ink and brush painting, is conventionally considered to be "'assertive' (*yang*)—a tool of the artist, it reflects the character and qualities of the artist. Ink, on the other hand, is 'receptive' (*yin*)—a material, it possesses and manifests its own qualities, especially in its interaction with water and the naturally absorbent ground. A brush mark, therefore, is a collaborative act between 'Man' and 'Nature' between the artist's brush and his material medium." Craig Yee, 'Zheng Chongbin: The Classical Origins of Contemporary Abstraction', *Randian-online*; [http://www.randian-online.com/np\\_blog/the-classical-origins-of-contemporary-abstraction/](http://www.randian-online.com/np_blog/the-classical-origins-of-contemporary-abstraction/); first accessed 20 July 2017

<sup>7</sup> Artist statement, op cit.

<sup>8</sup> For a definition of *Dao* and an account of its historical development as a concept, see Dainian Zhang, *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press and New Haven CN and London: Yale University Press, 2002, pp. 11-25

<sup>9</sup> For a definition of *Qi* and an account of its historical development as a concept, see Zhang, pp. 45-63

<sup>10</sup> For a definition of *Yin-yang* and an account of its historical development as a concept, see Zhang, pp. 83-94

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of the concept of *Wu wei*, see David Loy, 'Wei-wu-wei: Non-Dual Action', *Philosophy East and West* 35.1, 1985, pp. 73-87

<sup>12</sup> For a definition of *Ziran* and an account of its historical development as a concept, see Zhang, pp. 162-169

<sup>13</sup> The work of the contemporary artist Michael Cherney includes topographic comparisons of scenes depicted in historical *shan-shui* paintings with present day photographic representations of their actual locations. Although there are discrepancies between the two, not least because of recent changes to the landscape in China as a result of modernization, it is nevertheless possible to discern existential relationships between the former and the latter. See self-published albums related to Cherney's work, *The Sun is Not so Central*, *Map of Mountains and Seas* and *From 2 arises 3*

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of the ways in which painterly representations of clouds can be understood to exceed perspectival geometry, see Hubert Damisch, *A Theory of Cloud: Toward a History of Painting*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2002

<sup>15</sup> Wang Yao-ting, *Looking at Chinese Painting: a Comprehensive Guide to the Philosophy, Technique and History of Chinese Painting*, Tokyo: Nigensha Publishing, 1996, pp. 13-17

<sup>16</sup> Jason Kuo, 'Emptiness-Substance: Xushi', in Martin Powers and Katherine Tsiang eds, *A Companion to Chinese Art*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, p. 329

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Craig Clunas, 'What about Chinese Art?' in Catherine King (ed.), *Views of Difference: Different Views of Art*, New Haven CN and London: Yale University Press, 1999, p. 132

<sup>19</sup> Historically in China there has been a group of makers who define themselves as artisanal rather than literati. Artisanal makers are producers of pottery and other artefacts, such as furniture. Although distinct from the literati they adhere to Confucianist principles and Buddhist teachings, often incorporating meditation as part of their practice. The literati procured objects made by artisans in pursuance of aesthetic pleasure

<sup>20</sup> Michael Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1997, p. 253. Sullivan's identification of intersections between traditional Chinese aesthetics and aspects of Western modernist art is notorious within art historical circles for its lack of substantive evidence joining the two

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Li Zehou, *The Path of Beauty: A Study of Chinese Aesthetics*, Gong Lizheng trans, Beijing: Morning Glory Publishers, 1999, p. 225

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Craig Yee, 'Zheng Chongbin: The Classical Origins of Contemporary Abstraction', op cit.