



Where do your  
parents live?  
你父母住在那里？

How many kids do  
you have?  
你有多少个孩子？

Where were you born?  
你出生在那里？

How many times have you  
returned to your hometown  
since moving to Shanghai?  
自从搬到上海后，你回过家乡几次？

Where do your friends  
and relatives live?  
你的朋友和亲戚住在哪里？

M I G R A N T  
L A N D S C A P E S  
移民景观

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This work is an Art experiment, which try to translate real lives into something that we all can understand and feel. Social problems are generally treated and felt as something that is happening to someone else, not us; just news that come and go. China is facing a huge problem of population and internal migration. Even though the government is implementing different proposals to control birth rate and migrations, natural flows of people are arising every year, and are forcing China to challenge new conflicts.

I wanted to talk about social reality of people who is investing their present to have a better future. It is a big international problem that emerged in china longer than a decade ago, but after a deep research on this topic I understood that this social complicated situations have real persons behind, whose lives are my real point of interest. This scientific point of view wanted me to tackle the topic from the big data to the particular, but I decided to go deep into single lives to have the real approach and know the causes of this huge human migrations.

The first thing I had to face was the crucial need to clear all my occidental pre-thoughts, so I could tackle my project with clear mind and no misconceptions. That never happened and I only could see how reality was little by little eroding all this occidental pre-thoughts, giving me a new perspective and an open meaning about Chinese culture.

After understanding the process of migration form rural china to Shanghai I realized that many people arrive to this city with barely anything, so for them, the fastest ways to make money is to recycle paper and plastic from the trash. I decided to work with the collective that is working with paper as my work is related to sustainable concepts.

I conducted three interviews to three random people I met on the streets looking for paper to recycle. For this work Tiffany Fung helped me to translate the 20 questions interview and also to translate the answers we got. For this process I offered 100 Yuan to every person interviewed.

For the methodology in the questionnaire I decided to make questions about geographical information but also numeric information, so I could translate this data into geo-located layout.

The process of integrating objective data into a subjective proposal is a source of inspiration itself, becoming one of the main topics of this work. What is the roll of art and science in transmitting information? Where are the boundaries between scientific and artistic? What's acceptable as a scientific result and what's is not? Is it fair to use science as an artistic methodology?

I use my scientific background as the source and the basis to sustain and justify my artistic decisions.

Maps are the most important and the maybe the most spread non anthropocentric point of view of our existence. We are not part of that stable and permanent world described in the maps. They are only the culture where humans can grow and develop. Landmarks and landscapes are the environment where we try to survive. Reading a map is reading the story of the earth, how water and populations grow and spread throughout the earth. There is a story in every map and we have to learn the language to understand what is written.

I use the maps as the book and library where I can tell the stories of these people.

Whit the information I got from the interviews, I generated an emotional map of these singular lives. These maps have a totally unreal 3D topography that can be read in terms of geography, where mountains, valleys and rivers are emotional features that were caught in the interviews. You can see Shanghai and their home towns; you can see their parents if they are alive, close to them or if they are dead. You can see if friends live far from them or if they come back for New Year. You can see how much money the get from the cardboard or where do they sell the paper. All this information is hidden into the contour lines, valleys and creeks in the map.

As my subject of study are the people who is collecting cardboard from the trash I decided to do so and collect the materials from the trash to make my own paper. I made new pulp from old used cardboard and using ancient Chinese paper making technics I made 16 new paper sheets.

As a matter of principle sustainability is always present in my work. I feel the responsibility of making art pieces that has ephemeral life and don't last long in nature. The maps are only the first step of this process where nature should be the main actor. The maps become the nutrient and the food for the seeds embedded in the pulp as a memory of the farms that these people were caring in their home towns. Paper is the nexus between shanghai for plants and people and are the metaphor of taking root and spread. By watering the maps the real piece of art starts and nature can do his job dissolving my work and returning to the soil what I borrowed.

For this project I counted with the collaboration of Lukas Hövelmann-Köper, German composer based in Berlin (<http://hoevelmann-koeper.com>). Using the 3d model to extract the topography of the emotional maps he could make his own interpretation of this project through music, creating an infinite piece that always sounds different, self-generated when the triggers follow the contour lines of the model. Every piece would sound different according with the specific life we are talking about. At the same time a video of this interaction is permanently showing the path of the music and the meaning of each new sound.

From this point, the unpredictable rules the installation and my role is just observe and interpret the results.

- Plants that are further die first because I involuntary take care more of plants that are together.
- Animal populations appear and take advantage of the plants grown. Worms and aphids are installed in my work.
- Plants that were planted already grown are dying
- Plants grown from the map seeds are growing better
- There are plants growing that were not introduced in this art experiment voluntarily and are growing much better than the planted seeds.
- The maps are breaking
- Some plants died
- Some seeds don't germinate
- Visitors don't care what is happening
- Visitors are very interested in the installation
- Visitors touch the installation
- As the installation is facing north, plants are etiolated.
- The artificial light is not enough for a healthy growth
- The heating was killing the plants
- After controlling the growth with video, I realize that plants are not growing. I add some fertilizer.
- Now I have to move the installation to another location in Shanghai.

I don't translate all this results into the real life of this people because it is too clear how the fact of being immigrant is affecting their lives, and how resources and public policies can influence a single life, determining the limits between life and death.