

Birgit Hopfener

Qiu Zhijie's concept of Total Art: A case study of transculturally situating discourses of integrated art practice

My paper rests on the assumption that globally dominant discourses of how art intervenes into life have been mainly confined to Western narratives and topologies of art and have not yet taken into account locally situated discourses that are constituted through transcultural histories of dissolution of life and art. But in order to be able to critically analyze today's globally entangled art phenomena it is necessary to formulate a critical discourse of global contemporary art (Peter Osborne 2013) that takes into account different genealogies of contemporaneity and contemporary art concepts in transcultural perspective.

It is against this background that my paper focuses on the contemporary Chinese artist Qiu Zhijie (b. 1969) as a case study. It examines his integrated art concept of Total Art and how he conceptualizes and realizes the intervention of art into life through examinations of history and culture as well as through socially engaged art forms. It will be analyzed how he works through multiple historical and cultural narratives and concepts of integrated art concepts such as for example Joseph Beuys' social sculpture or the traditional Chinese concept of self-cultivation. Based on close readings of artworks and the analysis of his writings and visual mappings of the concept of Total Art I will scrutinize (art-) historical and socio-political conditions upon which the artist constructs his understanding of how art should intervene in life and how he critically enacts his contemporary situatedness in a globally entangled art world.

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