

WANG GONGXIN and LIN TIANMIAO are Chinese artists who have received international recognition. When they first met, Wang, who is a year older than Lin, was a teacher at the Capital Normal University in Beijing China, and Lin was his student. Their relationship was constantly discussed on campus. They moved to New York together and set up business before moving back in 1995 to Beijing, where they now reside. Their work *Here, or There* (exhibited in the 2002 Shanghai Biennale) is their only collaboration. They combined their divergent practices through a fabric-based installation and video art. Lin made wearable pieces for nine models, using cotton, genuine hair and netting. Wang recorded videos of these models performing in front of destroyed and abandoned traditional landscapes such as fields, gardens and parking lots. The cooperation process was tumultuous and caused constant arguments which led to the decision to never work together again.

**As an artist couple, does your relationship have any influence on the creation of artworks?**

LIN: My sensitivity and pursuit of exquisiteness are channelled through my artworks, and less through my daily life – I am content as long as I have basic needs, such as food. I am not particular about other material pursuits, such as clothes – if you asked me to find a lost button in five minutes, I would not be able to do it. Before a large-scale exhibition, I would struggle with doubts. It is Mr Wang's support that pushes me forward, giving me the final push.

WANG: When we were young and naïve, we would often guide each other. Once we had both established our individual artistic values and developed maturity in our artworks, it became difficult for us to compromise on concepts and ideas. So now we can only have discussions about other people's artworks. During our creation processes, we became independent and do not exchange ideas and opinions. I only get involved when she asks me to, and similarly, I will not ask her to see my work until it has been fully developed.

**How would you describe each other's characters both in life and in art creation?**

LIN: We both have a bad temper. We have no patience for people or things, and socialising isn't either of our strengths. When problems arise, he is resilient, but not in every situation, for instance, illness. His simplicity, honesty, punctuality, loyalty to friends and respect for sentiments have all inspired and positively affected me.

WANG: She may not constantly be coming up with new ideas, but once she devotes herself to one, she is able to persist to a level which normal people can't and won't reach. She uses straightforward expressions and simple methods in her artworks: she twists threads around objects, once, twice, three times, until she has wrapped all the pots and pans. When she pushes limits to points you cannot imagine, you will start to feel a sense of threat. Insistence is an essential quality for every artist.

LIN: Although it may appear that Gongxin's work is not touching, the intention and message behind them play a really important role. He has a lot of brilliant ideas that are flexible and adaptable. Each of his works may seem dissimilar and disconnected but once you see them comprehensively, the links will emerge naturally.

In my creation process, I don't have the ability to express my thoughts as clearly as Gongxin. It normally takes me two or three months after the exhibition to organise my hazy and abstract thoughts into specific description. My artworks must be viewed in real life in order to experience details and my sense of sensitivity to the materials. Every work is a huge "project" that requires a lot of labour. Every time I complete a work, my hands and feet are swollen. The processes are a way to provide me with new understandings of traditional craft and cultural concepts.

**Could you tell us more about the creation of your collaborative artwork *Here, or There*?**

LIN: That artwork was a great challenge to us. It was also our first time working on an artwork together. Although we lived together for a long time, it was really hard for us to work together. We had different thinking and working habits. We were quarrelling all the time, we even thought about exhibiting nothing but a divorce certificate. However, when the exhibition date drew closer, we calmed down and there was no time left for quarrelling. We could do nothing but find points that we both agreed on.