

**Nissan Art Award 2020
A Report from Wuhan K11 Art Village**

Ishu Han

Wuhan is a city located in the heart of the Yangtze River Basin, and because of its proximity to the river, it has a long history of urban development. Many renowned poets have used it as the setting for their works, and it is, in fact, the stage for the Three Kingdoms. For many of us, perhaps, it is known above all for the new coronavirus pandemic of 2020. I had participated in several artist-in-residence programmes abroad, but this was my first exposure to the one in China. This opportunity gave me a sense of returning home, but at the same time, it also brought me a sense of heading somewhere for the first time. So, I decided to participate in Wuhan K11 Art Village to understand this sense of ambivalence. Unfortunately, I had to adjust my itinerary until the last minute, but this visit allowed me not only to interact with the locals and immerse myself in the history and culture but also to spend time exploring my artistic practice.

As the entry into China was strict, I had to quarantine myself for three weeks after arriving in Shanghai before moving on to Wuhan. It was mandatory to go through thermometry twice a day and take a PCR test every three or four days under the quarantine in a hotel. Meals were delivered in the 'knock and run' style to my door, but online food delivery services were only allowed for milk and fruits for some strange reason. On the other hand, fresh towels and other amenities were provided, at least upon my request. It was a very rigidly controlled space, a visual projection of our fear of invisible beings. And to my surprise, it was amid the Chinese New Year, so I could see fireworks set off outside every night. During this quarantine, I made drawings from old photographs every day, as if to write a diary, and spent my days thinking about how to deal with visual images in this enclosed space. I also made lanterns with lunch bags over the lights and recorded their glow on video.

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I finally made it to Wuhan on 22 February. It was a much bigger city than I had imagined. The initial plan was to visit temples and museums and give a talk during the stay, but local lockdowns began around where I was on the second day of my arrival. All citizens had to take a PCR test, and unfortunately, tourist attractions such as museums and temples were closed. However, through friends and Wuhan K11 Art Village, I was fortunate enough to meet local artists, hear their stories around the time of 2020, and see their works during a studio visit. All of the works expressed their lives powerfully and gave me courage as a fellow artist. I want to continue our exchange in the future as well. But the positive vibe I had gained through this beautiful encounter was overshadowed because of the news of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and I became a little hesitant to use SNS, which I had intended to update daily. We live in a world of information, but this circumstance made clear that SNS was a means to imagine others. So I spent many days just strolling around the city in agony. But it was during this time I came across a Chu opera called 'Dǎ Dòufu'. It is a traditional opera here in Hubei Province and is on a par with Peking Opera. The story is about a couple who decide to celebrate the New Year by making tofu, but the husband who has gone to purchase soya beans spends the money on alcohol and gambling, and on his way home without the money, he tries to cheat his wife by putting sand in a bag of soya beans. Such a trivial, mundane story like this made me feel happy once again to appreciate our life. So, I covered the lights in my studio with a shopping bag to make another lantern; the idea was to use that light to make a video piece on the Chu opera 'Dǎ Dòufu'.

Half of the time spent in this residence was under quarantine, but it was a valuable opportunity to reflect on our current social situation. While participating in an overseas artist in residence is very rare under this pandemic, this experience made me realise that our movement, encounter and imagination are the sheer energy for our expression. It truly is a case of Chiko-Goitsu: awareness comes only through practice. I was convinced during my stay that many things could only be known and understood through action. Even now that I have left Wuhan, I feel the journey continues.

Residency Period: January 30th – March 15th, 2022

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Drawing Old Photographs During The Quarantine



Studio Visit and Meeting Local Artists



In The Vicinity of Wuhan K11 Art Village

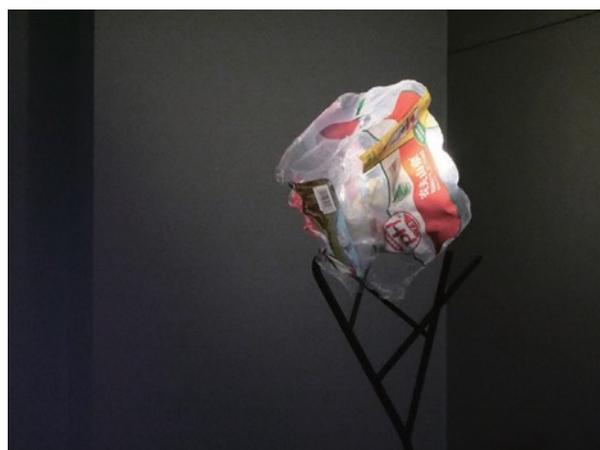
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Buildings From The 1910s~30s



1985 Artists in Wuhan



Making of My Work