

<b>Institution:</b> 10007140 Birmingham City University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 32 Art and Design		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Repositioning Chinese Contemporary Art in the Globalised Art World		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2007 to 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Jiang Jiehong	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Professor of Chinese Art	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2002 to present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 01/2014 to 12/2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The research of Jiang Jiehong in the Centre for Chinese Visual Art has had a substantial impact on perceptions in the West of Chinese art. It has been far-reaching in its effect, having influenced curatorial practices the UK, China and elsewhere globally, fundamentally informing cultural policy for civic, governmental and other organisations.</p> <p>Jiang's international curatorial activity has repositioned contemporary Chinese art from being a marginalised topic to one where it is recognised as fully engaging with current global concerns and manifests itself in innovative and methodologically diverse ways. Through the establishment of large-scale network partnerships and transcultural exchange programmes, artists from China are now squarely located within the international artistic milieu.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>In 2007, Jiang founded the Centre for Chinese Visual Arts (CCVA) as a pioneering research hub in the field to foster new understandings and perspectives of Chinese contemporary art and transcultural curating. It has been ground-breaking in curating a number of significant exhibitions in the UK that investigate contemporary art as an autonomic development in China, challenging the western-centric view of Chinese art. In 2014, Jiang led the curatorial team at the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art (CFCCA), the UK's leading gallery in Chinese art since 1986, to make <i>Harmonious Society</i> at the Asia Triennial Manchester, presented at six venues across Manchester. 36 artists from Greater China, the majority well established, together with some emerging talent, were commissioned to develop new work, critically responding through their personal reflections, to the era of unprecedented social, ideological and cultural transformations in the 'harmonious society' [R01]. Researching the relationship between contemporary art practice and urban transformation, Jiang constructed a singular perspective on the experience and appearance of Chinese cities where historical sites have been destroyed to make way for urbanisation, and where new heritage, memories, and futures have been invented. The research was first published in book form, <i>An Era without Memories: Chinese Contemporary Photography on Urban Transformation</i> [R02], and then developed further into a curatorial project, <i>This is Shanghai</i>, as a central part of Liverpool's 'China Dream' season, exploring Liverpool and its twin city in China in the dynamic development of globalisation [R03]. 'China Dream', a 9-month arts season supported by University of Liverpool, was inspired by the arrival of the Terracotta Warriors to Liverpool.</p> <p>In China, Jiang's approach to commissioning new Chinese art for an international stage forces a re-examination of cultural differences and the linearity of a historical narrative. For example, <i>The Shadow Never Lies</i> (2016) [R04] took a cross-cultural and translational approach to revisit the notions of 'shadow' in both western and eastern contexts, and to explore and discuss them through literary, philosophical, artistic and curatorial perspectives. Awarded funding by the Leverhulme Trust and presented at two curated exhibitions, the project <i>Everyday Legend</i> (2016-18) [R05] critically re-examined the fragmentation of Chinese traditions during political and social transformations, and the ways in which those traditions have been appropriated and reinvented as cultural roots for contemporary practices. The project also reinterpreted cultural traditions in the field of contemporary art, across diverse disciplines, methods and categories of expertise. Two contemporary art exhibitions have been curated so far, specifically for the project, through practice-led research. Other project events include workshops conducted in Shanghai, Datong,</p>		

Groningen, London, a symposia in Beijing, and finally an international conference in Birmingham, all hosted at the project's partner institutions.

As part of Jiang's curatorial research, he challenges conventional art spaces, interrogates the distance between art and everyday life and creates new platforms for cross-cultural exchanges. To this end, his exhibitions are often curated for display across non-institutional venues and public spaces. The 2018 Thailand Biennale: *Edge of the Wonderland* [R06] expanded this further by showcasing art in the natural world. Unlike any traditional art biennales, Jiang commissioned from global artists more than 65 new site-specific works that were installed completely outdoor on Krabi islands. Through this unique platform new curatorial and artistic strategies were produced responding to the increasing conflicts between the global and the local, the artistic and the natural and, between site-specificity and sustainability.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- R01) Jiang, J., The Third Asia Triennial Manchester: *Harmonious Society*, lead-curated exhibitions at CFCCA, the Museum of Science and Industry, the John Rylands Library, Manchester Cathedral, National Football Museum and the ArtWork in Manchester (2014); edited and authored exhibition catalogue, Manchester: CFCCA, ISBN 9780957633230. [returned to REF2021]
- R02) Jiang, J., *An Era without Memories: Chinese Contemporary Photography on Urban Transformation*, sole-authored book, London: Thames and Hudson, 2015, ISBN 9780500544433 (shortlisted for the Award of Art China Best Art Publication 2016). [returned to REF2021]
- R03) Jiang, J., *This Is Shanghai*, sole-curated exhibition at China Dream Season and partner exhibition of the Tenth Liverpool Biennial, Cunard Building, Liverpool (2018); edited and authored exhibition catalogue and short guide, Liverpool: Liverpool City Council.
- R04) Jiang, J., *The Shadow Never Lies*, co-curated exhibition, the Twenty-first Century Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai (2016), nominated for *Best Art Museum Exhibitions Nationwide* in China; co-edited and authored exhibition catalogue, Shanghai: The People's Fine Arts Publishing House, ISBN 9787532299867. [returned to REF2021]
- R05) Jiang, J., *Everyday Legend*, sole-curated exhibitions, Shanghai Minsheng Art Museum (2016), Shanghai and School of Art, Birmingham (2018); edited and authored exhibition catalogue, Shanghai: The People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 2016, ISBN 9787558603716. [returned to REF2021]
- R06) Jiang, J., The First Thailand Biennale: *Edge of the Wonderland*, lead-curated exhibitions, Krabi, Thailand (2018-19); edited and authored exhibition catalogue and short guide, Bangkok: Ministry of Culture (2018). [returned to REF2021]

### Key research grants in relation to the above research

- Jiang (PI), AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award (with CFCCA), *The Other Stage: Curating Chinese Contemporary Art in the UK*, 2014-18, £56,000.
- Jiang (PI), Leverhulme International Network, *Everyday Legend: Reinventing Traditions in Chinese Contemporary Art*, 2016-18, £95,114.
- Jiang (Co-I), AHRC Research Networking, *Art Diplomacy and Nation Branding: The Visual Politics of Reinventing China*, 2020-22, £36,289 (delayed start due to COVID-19).

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words).

Jiang's research has contributed to a significant shift in perceptions, in the UK and beyond, of contemporary Chinese art. From being considered 'exotic' or 'other', a recognition has developed that Chinese art addresses universal themes such as urbanisation, social conflicts, and cultural legacies. His research has generated impact on 1) art organisations and their curatorial approaches, 2) the cultural strategies of government bodies, and 3) cross-cultural understanding in the globalised art world today.

## 1) Art organisations and curatorial approaches

Jiang's research has **influenced art organisations and their curatorial practices in featuring Chinese art on the international stage**. Invited by CFCCA, Jiang curated *Harmonious Society* (2014) to respond to the Asia Triennial Manchester. Extending from CFCCA's own single venue, Jiang's proposal urged the CFCCA to construct five new partnership venues to stage "the UK's largest ever exhibition of contemporary art from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong" [S01], presenting work by more than 30 artists. *Harmonious Society* attracted an audience of nearly 230,000, compared to average audiences of 5,000 for a CFCCA main gallery exhibition [S02]. The former Director of CFCCA comments: "*Jiang's curatorial research has **opened new horizons for a range of public-facing organisations, curators and local authorities, [has] enabled numerous audiences in the UK to access quality Chinese contemporary art **changing perceptions of Chinese culture** to reflect the forward-facing ambition of globally significant artists***" [S02]. Similarly, having worked closely with Jiang, the Director of Ikon Gallery has, uniquely for an art gallery in the UK, featured many Chinese artists in the gallery since 2008. He says, "*Jiang's pre-eminence in promoting Chinese artists abroad, and British artists in China – within an authentic internationalist paradigm - has had considerable impact on cross-cultural understanding, strengthening existing links and forging new ones which will benefit projects we might share in the future*" [S03].

Jiang's research focus on contemporary art through cultural perspectives has attracted collaborations across the world. His Leverhulme project on the dialogues between art/cultural traditions and contemporary practice **constructed an interdisciplinary network with five important international partnerships**: Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) and New Century Art Foundation (Beijing), University of Groningen (Groningen) and Goldsmiths (London) and the White Rabbit Foundation (Sydney). As one of the major outputs, the exhibition *Everyday Legend* (2016) was presented at Minsheng Art Museum, the leading art museum in China – "*it revisits and discusses the cultural legacies, explores the cultural dilemma in China through those critical and artistic reflections...*" [S04], and re-assess the cultural value of Chinese contemporary art in the international context.

In recognition of his leadership in the field, Jiang was invited to take the editorship of the *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, the only peer-reviewed journal of its kind, and made all issues themed. Under Jiang's editorship, since 2017, it has been accepted by prestigious databases such as Scopus, and experienced growth with an increase of 17% (2017-19) in the number of institutional subscriptions worldwide, including prestigious art institutions outside academia, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) and the V&A Museum [S05].

## 2) Governments and cultural strategies

Jiang's research has **influenced the inclusion of Chinese art as part of the cultural strategies in the UK and internationally, encouraged cross-cultural exchange and created new spaces to encounter art**. To celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Capital of Culture, Liverpool City Council (LCC) planned a nine-month China Season for 2018. The concept of *China Dream* proposed by Jiang was accepted as an overarching theme aiming "*to bridge Chinese politics and cultural identities and ideas*" as "*the foundation for all of programming throughout the duration of the project*", and to build relationships between leading organisations in both countries for future cultural exchanges [S06]. As a centrepiece of *China Dream* season, LCC invited Jiang to curate *This is Shanghai* in Liverpool "*reinforcing a creative link between the two cities*", and, according to Deputy Mayor and cabinet member for culture, tourism and events, "*to introduce a whole new audience to Chinese art and showcase just how impressive and relevant it is*" [S07]. Installed in the Cunard Building as its primary site and other public locations, the show was critically acclaimed and had attracted more than 41,000 visitors during the two-month period, and was invited as a partner exhibition of the 10<sup>th</sup> Liverpool Biennial.

The success of Jiang's research in repositioning China in the contemporary art world through transcultural curating has influenced Thailand to establish the nation's first biennale. Following Jiang's advice, the Ministry of Culture in Thailand changed its original idea of an 'Art Olympic' competition for emerging artists into 'the First Thailand Biennale'. This breakthrough for the country led it to **forge one of the most important art events in Asia** and to raise its visibility internationally. Jiang was subsequently invited to be the first Lead Curator for the Thailand Biennale. The Deputy Prime Minister described the Biennale as *"provid[ing] an international stage for artists to showcase their works"* explaining the long-term influence of the Biennale's organisation and curatorial approach: *"the event has set a model where collaboration from local communities, governmental bodies, private organisations, as well as worldwide networks of artists and cultural institutions, are brought together in organising a successful creative event"* [S08]. The second Thailand Biennale will be curated by one of the world's leading curators, Yuko Hasegawa, and hosted in Korat in 2021.

### 3) Cross-cultural understanding

In addition to the impact on curatorial strategies and cultural policies of organisations and governments, Jiang's research has provided a platform to **enhance cross-cultural understanding** between the East and the West. For example, *the Shadow Never Lies* provided a platform for international artists and audiences in China to revisit everyday experiences and share ideas through visual perceptions, whilst in the UK, *This Is Shanghai* explored urban transformations in the evolution of cities during a process of globalisation – both exhibitions having bilingual catalogues for the widest audience possible. Jiang's *"instinctive understanding and appreciation of both Chinese and UK art and culture provides a unique skill in understanding how best to bring these two worlds together"*; as commented by the Head of Creative Development from LCC, *"the subtle and well-conceived curatorial framework and programming of the project, fostered a more understanding and integrated idea of modern Chinese culture into the collective psyche of the people and legislators in Liverpool. It overturned some preconceptions and simply but powerfully created shared ideas and experiences between the people of two port cities who live very different lives"*. The comments continue: *"the impact of the China Dream programme was deep. It exposed local audiences to new and ambitious Chinese artists, drove a significant domestic and international audience into the city, established frameworks for ongoing collaborations and also led to a second year of China Dream content in 2019"* [S06].

For the Thailand Biennale, the decision to curate and install site-specific works on natural sites allowed a minimum of 2 million national and international visitors (according to Thailand's tourism statistics over the four-month exhibition duration in Krabi) to 'encounter' art in settings that challenged and enhanced cross-cultural understanding. The Thai government report says, it *"is an expansive, ambitious visual art project that involved almost 60 Thai and international artists, with artworks placed in various environs [sic] – beaches, caves, cliffs, waterfalls, forests, deltas, national parks, traffic roundabouts, a whole island ... dramatic, effective site-specific pieces that maximise the geography and history of their surroundings"* [S09]. According to Thailand's Ministry of Culture, *"[Due to] Jiang's extensive knowledge of latest contemporary art practice... experiences in cross-cultural exchanges in the globalised art world, and his leadership in cutting-edge curatorial work, we are able to not only take this significant initiative of making a new national biennale, but also, take the challenge of producing a site-specific biennale on natural sites beyond walls of conventional art museum"* [S10].

Alongside the increase of China's power, the Global East and the pace of globalisation, a China issue is a world issue: urbanisation, social conflicts, and cultural legacies across the world. Jiang's research relocated Chinese art from a peripheralized to a focused position in the international arena by reconstructing curatorial practices and cultural policies, 'translating' Chinese contemporary art to global audience, and cross-culturally producing new understanding of our time.



**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- S01) *Harmonious Society*, Online review of the exhibition, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-29364694>.
- S02) Former Director of CFCCA and currently, Director, Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, Letter of Support. **[Named Corroborator 1]**
- S03) Director, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, Letter of Support. **[Named Corroborator 2]**
- S04) *Everyday Legend*, online review of the exhibition, <http://collection.sina.com.cn/ddys/2016-11-08/doc-iffxnety7739515.shtml>. (in Chinese)
- S05) Journals Manager, Intellect Books and Journals, Letter of Support. **[Named Corroborator 3]**
- S06) Head of Creative Development, Liverpool City Council, Letter of Support. **[Named Corroborator 4]**
- S07) *This Is Shanghai*, online review of the exhibition, <https://liverpoolexpress.co.uk/shanghai-artists-take-over-liverpool-waterfront/>.
- S08) Deputy Prime Minister, Thailand, 'Preface', in *Edge of the Wonderland*, Thailand Biennale catalogue, Bangkok: Ministry of Culture, 2019.
- S09) The First Thailand Biennale, online review of the exhibition, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/life/arts-and-entertainment/1603974/a-note-on-thailand-biennale>.
- S10) Director, Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture in Thailand, Letter of Support. **[Named Corroborator 5]**