

Meiqin Wang

To Demolish: Thinking about Urbanization in China through a Collaborative Art Project in the Countryside¹



Free Territory II, June 21, 2010,
Tongguling Mountain, Hainan.
Photo: Weng Fen.

One-Day Trip with *Chaile Travel* as a Visitor and Participant

It is necessary to begin this text by describing a one-day trip and, simultaneously, an art making process that took place on June 18, 2011 in the Wenchang region of Hainan, the southernmost province of China. The trip was organized by *Chaile Travel* a concept-based art project and non-profit organization headquartered in a remote rural village, Taishan, located in the southeastern end of Dongjiao town in Wenchang. The organizers, also the founders of *Chaile Travel*, were a small group of university art professors and independent artists from Hainan, consisting of Weng Fen, Liu Jun, Ma Jie, Lu Yunzhang, and Huang Xuebin. Visitors on the trip were from a wide range of professional backgrounds including an architect, artist, art historian (myself), designer, government administrator, lawyer, media reporter, and poet. The night before the scheduled trip, all non-local visitors arrived at Haikou, the provincial capital of Hainan, where we met with the organizers and local participants for a preparatory meeting and some socializing.

Early the next day, we took a one-hour ride eastward to the rural outskirts of Wenchang region and disembarked right in front of Tongguling National Natural Reserve. There we began hiking along small paths through the hills that bordered the sea. About one hour later, we reached the top of a hill

Free Territory III, June 18, 2011, Tongguling Mountain, Hainan. Photo: Weng Fen.



known as Beijianshan, where the organizers introduced us to a site-specific artwork. It was a simple timber bench with its two legs buried in the ground and served as a viewpoint where hikers could take a rest to enjoy the beautiful scenery. Visitors from a previous trip

organized by *Chaile Travel* chose this spot to install the bench, which was titled *Free Territory II*, suggesting that there already existed a *Free Territory I*. Indeed, the organizers told us that *Free Territory I* was placed on top of a hill on the other side of Beijianshan. After contemplating the view from the bench, we hiked to the top of another hill nearby, where we worked on our premeditated task: choosing a spot to install a third bench that we brought all along with us. The bench had been inscribed beforehand with the theme of this trip, “The Psychological Impact of Rapid Geographic Change and Urban Development on Life and Culture in the Countryside,” and the date of the visit. This spot was named *Free Territory III*. We then took photos of each other sitting on the bench, wanting to be the first to enjoy this piece of art and to appreciate the stunning scenery the site had to offer.

A new socialist countryside in Wenchang, Hainan. Photo: Meiqin Wang.



Leaving the bench behind, we walked down from the hill and along the beach and then back up mountainous paths towards the Tongguling National Natural Reserve. From there we drove to the next two points of interest on the agenda of that day’s plan. The first was a brand new residential complex, which consisted of rows of three story townhouses standing along a main road. On the other side of the road stood a newly built elementary school, which consisted of several medium and high-rise buildings. This was a new village built from the ground up to accommodate farmers who were relocated from remote rural villages after the local government requisitioned their land. Similar new villages had been built in some other locations of this region for the same purpose, all having convenient access to public transportation, educational institutions, and other facilities. They are the product of a nationwide movement called “New Socialist Countryside,” initiated by the Chinese central government in 2005



to develop China's rural regions.² The second point of interest was a massive construction site—the original home of many relocated farmers and a future satellite launching pad whose plan was also approved by the government

The satellite-launching centre under initial construction, Hainan. Photo: Meiqin Wang.

in 2005. The completed satellite centre will be the fourth of its kind in China. According to the plan, this space centre will occupy three thousand acres of land, while a space-themed amusement park of some one thousand acres will be constructed nearby. We also explored the neighbouring areas that were left desolate after residents left and buildings were demolished.

In the afternoon the trip further unfolded in Taishan village, which is the ancestral hometown of Weng Fen, a well known contemporary artist and the practical leader of *Chaile Travel*, which is headquartered in this village. Upon arrival, we wandered around the village, walking along winding paths amid farming fields and forests of coconut trees. We walked through narrow alleys framed by rural houses built in various types of architectural styles that had been developed at different times over the past centuries. Finally we reached the ancestral house of Weng Fen; it was a typical courtyard house of the region, with white walls and a red-brown roof, but time had taken its toll, so the wall was no longer white, and the roof had turned greyish. When we arrived, several of Weng Fen's relatives were busy preparing food and drinks in an open area outside of the house and shaded from the sun under tall coconut trees. It was a temporary outdoor kitchen and dining room and living room, brought together for that one day.



Weng Family Wenchang chicken dish, consisting mainly of chicken and rice. Photo: Meiqin Wang.

We were offered fresh coconut water from coconuts that the hosts picked directly from the trees, a wonderful refreshment after a half-day's trip in hot summer weather. Following this customary drink that every traveler is expected to have when visiting Hainan province, we savoured the "Weng Family Wenchang chicken dish," vegetables, coffee, and milk tea. In casual conversation, the hosts informed us of the complex history of the food and drinks we were enjoying, which involved transnational exchanges over the past centuries between the Hainan people and their counterparts in the neighbouring East Asian countries. The Weng Family Wenchang chicken dish was based on the famous Wenchang chicken dish, in which the chicken is boiled then served with salt and ginger, but was modified by Weng Fen's grandfather when he worked as a cook in Malaysia and catered to a complex clientele that included both native Malaysians and Westerners. He later

returned to his hometown and passed on the modified recipe as a family legacy to his children. Coffee and milk tea are also two popular local drinks; long ago they both were brought in by travelers from Southeast Asian countries. This sampling of a famous local dish and popular drinks not only served to feed those who came all the way to this remote countryside where there are no restaurants or grocery stores, it also exposed them to some of the history and traditions of this region.

Chaile Travel symposium,
June 18, 2011. Taishan village,
Hainan. Photo: Meiqin Wang.



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After the lunch break, we rested in hammocks under the coconut trees, as many locals do everyday, engaging in casual conversations with the hosts and among ourselves. We had one final agenda to complete in the afternoon, a symposium exploring the impact of urbanization on rural traditions and the problems and opportunities that the vast countryside in China is encountering. The symposium began in the hall of the house with the organizers introducing the history, mission, and past events of *Chaile Travel*. The symposium then moved outside under the coconut trees and continued with each visitor speaking about the implementation of urbanization in the countryside, including what was happening or would happen at this particular village. Issues brought up included opportunities and challenges the countryside is facing as it is now under pressure of development, complicated legal and cultural issues related to transforming farm land into

commercial land, distribution of newly accumulated social wealth coming from this process of redefinition and reuse, peasant migration, the future of rural society under the impact of a new economic structure, and the role of intellectuals, including artists, in the process of rural urbanization. It was a symposium of multilayered exchanges reflecting the wide range of professional backgrounds of the participants that included not only the visitors, but a farmer and a retired government official as well, who were from the very village under examination. This two-and-a-half-hour symposium concluded the one-day trip.

This trip was an integral part of *Chaile Travel*, which is conceived by the organizers as a continuous and collaborative art making process. And it was not a passive tourist experience. Instead, the trip, or art visit, as it was referred to, is the content and methodology of *Chaile Travel* as an ongoing conceptual artwork envisioned by a group of contemporary artists. The art visit incorporated a number of activities combining the ordinary with the extraordinary, premeditation with spontaneity, and the physical with the cultural and intellectual. The morning expedition allowed us to explore the natural environment and broad social fabric of this region; the afternoon activities provided immediate contact with the people, their living environment, and the food of Taishan village, as well as a forum for intellectuals. At the end of the trip, the visitors left the village and went back to their respective lives and work. However, the results of their visit, participation, and contribution remained with *Chaile Travel* and became part of its growing activities and expanding archive. The organizers videotaped the whole visit and transcribed the remarks made by everyone at the symposium. The participation of these visitors resulted in photos, video clips, texts, and the benches that sustain interaction with nature in a quiet way and that mark the three territories. In each of its one-day trips, *Chaile Travel* provided a site-specific environment for visitors to discover and reflect upon urbanization and how it is affecting the countryside. In return, it anticipates the contribution of its visitors, who bring their prior knowledge and different perspectives to the discussion, and thus turns them into collaborators.

To Demolish: The Logic of Chinese Urbanization and Its Resonance in Contemporary Art

As a concept-based art project, *Chaile Travel* embodies some key elements that have been characteristic of global contemporary art since the 1990s. Its approach is interdisciplinary, multi-media, socially oriented, collaborative, open-ended, and, finally, grounded in the current reality of China. It is this combination that makes this art project a case of interest. Initiated in 2007, *Chaile Travel* was officially founded in March 2010. Before exploring how *Chaile Travel* as an organization operates or manifests itself as an artwork, it is worthwhile to ponder upon the title of the project, which makes explicit reference to China's recent sociopolitical and art history.

The Chinese term *chaile* consists of two characters: *chai* and *le*. *Chai* is a verb, meaning to demolish. *Le* is an auxiliary word, used to indicate that the action of demolition must happen or to suggest the completion of

Doug Lewis, *Super Bar Street*, 2008, digital prints on dibond, installation, Beijing. Courtesy of the artist.



the action. *Chaile* means to demolish or having been demolished, here referring to urbanization in China—demolition and redevelopment. The pronunciation of *chaile* is also close to the word “China” as it is spoken in English, and by using it as the project title, the artists imply that one can equate demolition with China. Indeed, since the 1990s, the Chinese character *chai* has been omnipresent in cities across China; it is a character that is written or painted on buildings that are to be demolished. It is a prominent visual presence of everyday life among millions of people who reside in major cities, and it constituted a collective memory of the city environment in the 1990s until skyscrapers appeared one after another to replace that unique piece of memory.³

The visual aspect of this once unsettling aspect of urban life in major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai has been preserved in the art of some well-known contemporary Chinese artists. Beijing Artist Wang Jinsong’s work *One Hundred Signs of the Demolition*, completed in 1999, might be the first significant artwork that addresses this dramatic history of an urbanizing China. Using photography, the artist documented hundreds of buildings that had been imprinted with the big Chinese character *chai* on their walls. Written in red or white on numerous buildings, it announces the fate of these buildings. The practice of writing big characters on walls can be associated with what happened during the Cultural Revolution in China when it was a well-known political tactic used by politicians and public alike against their rivals or alleged “people’s enemies.” However, there is a long tradition of this in dynastic China as well, when the government would use big characters in public spaces, with or without a circle, to make important announcements, usually listing criminals at large or convicts to be executed. Today, big *chai* on a building unmistakably speak of a similar kind of government authority. Some of these buildings could be illegal structures that did not acquire a construction permit from the city authority; others

could involve safety issues. Most, however, belonged to old neighbourhoods that were designated to be demolished so that new buildings could be erected to accommodate the demands of a rapidly growing Chinese economy and urban population. Another artist, Zhang Dali, is also well known for work related to the demolition of old communities that he produced in the 1990s. In his *Dialogue* series (1995–98), he spray-painted more than two thousand giant bold-headed profiles of himself on the walls of half-dismantled buildings which he often photographed against a distant high-rise. Interpreted as street graffiti, site-specific installation, or performance by different writers, his work provides clear evidence of what has happened to these buildings that were marked with a *chai* character by city authorities.



Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, a wave of urbanization, together with its problems, expanded and reached inland cities across China. Recently, an unknown person exploited the omnipresent character *chai* in Xi'an, a second-tier city in central China, by adding new

Anonymous, painted on a wall near a bus station in Xi'an.
Photo: Meiqin Wang.

words to the encircled *chai*, thus transforming a government order into an acerbic comment. The two Chinese characters in the centre pronounced *chai na*, even more like the pronunciation of “China” in English, which is also spelled out underneath. With a question mark at the end of the Chinese characters it asks the question: Where to demolish? With an exclamatory mark behind the word “China,” it points to the location of the problem. China has demolished much in the past two decades, so where will it happen next? Most Chinese people would not know because they have no say in the decision-making process as to which community will be chosen to make way for new development. The process has never been transparent. The question “where to demolish?” is both literal and symbolic, pointing to the unending demolition process in China since the beginning of its reform and opening up. The circle is no longer a simple boundary that is seen on numerous buildings. Rather, it is painted in the shape of the outer rim of an old-fashioned Chinese coin, suggesting the monetary drive behind this nationwide movement of demolition and construction. It is a revealing image if one thinks of the fact that only a small portion of the population, including real estate developers and officials who collaborate with them, have profited greatly from this demolition and redevelopment movement, while the rest pay for it in dislocation, rising housing costs, inflation, and other social problems.

With demolition, there is corresponding construction, and, as many have pointed out, China has turned itself into one massive construction site. Cities build higher and higher skyscrapers to house the dream of modern urbanites and to meet the growing needs of a comfortable life. Xi'an artist Wang Fenghua's paintings illustrate the phenomenon of this construction

Wang Fenghua, *Li Gan Jian Ying* No. 26, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 200 cm. Courtesy of the artist.



frenzy and its underlying problems—cities are becoming more and more alike. His series *Li Gan Jian Ying* (2008) depicts, in a super realistic manner, a middle section of the mirrored glass surface of a modern skyscraper accompanied by a telegraph pole. The repetitive patterns of the shining glass surface confirm the sense of mindless replication and a lifeless coldness. The sleek and undistinguished surface of skyscrapers, devoid of any history, emotion, locality, or personality, becomes the metaphorical reflection of an increasingly alienated society under the pressure of urbanization. The title and content respond to each other, illustrating the Chinese idiom *li gan jian ying*, which literally means to put up a pole and see the shadow. The actual meaning, as used in both written and spoken Chinese language, is to expect instant results. This literal but witty visualization of the well-known saying acerbically comments on the motivation behind so much urban development in China. Many urbanizing projects are designed to achieve short-term outcomes so that government officials can obtain political capital for their career advancement and investors can bring back rapid profits.

At first, this typical Chinese mode of development seemed to have only happened in cities and their immediate perimeters where rapid economic development rendered the old urban setting inadequate and outmoded. The vast countryside remained intact, continuing centuries-old living environments while major cities experienced unprecedented social and physical transformations. A turning point in the direction of Chinese urbanization came at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when the central government initiated new policies and programs to develop rural China. These new initiatives were launched to address a number of problems and issues that were believed to have their source in low productivity and income levels among the rural population. According to some researchers, a better-developed countryside is likely to alleviate many urban problems such as migration, unemployment, the gap between rich and poor, overdevelopment, pollution, and crime.⁴ In particular, it has been widely acknowledged that even though China has achieved enormous

progress in the national economy and its citizens' incomes, the urban-rural gap, one of China's major social problems, has worsened to such a disturbing level that the stability of Chinese society is under threat.⁵ Some scholars have argued that efforts to decrease the urban-rural gap belong to the unfinished business of China's modernization.⁶ Furthermore, some have predicted that if China slows its urbanization, the rapid economic growth that it has achieved in the past two decades will not be sustained and social problems will only intensify.⁷ Simply put, China has to keep developing. Expanding urbanization into the countryside has been defined as a government priority, and decision makers in Beijing have launched the urban-rural integration movement in order to decrease the growing gap between urban and rural societies and to further economic growth.⁸

In light of this new-found emphasis on developing the countryside, different levels of government in China have designed various programs to grow the rural economy and enhance the rural quality of life. The vast countryside has now been drawn into the movement of demolition and construction under the master plan to build a "New Socialist Countryside," a slogan that first appeared in a formal government document in 2005. Construction programs are taking place in different provinces, and rural populations from remote regions are being relocated to new and standardized housing complexes that are conveniently adjacent to main roads and modern facilities. With the nationwide effort to urbanize, China is making big strides to transform itself from a rural and agricultural society into an urban and commercial one. Hainan province is no exception to this new wave of urbanization, and like many villages, Taishan has been put on the map of rural redevelopment.

Be there Before it Disappears: The Birth of *Chaile Travel* and Its Evolution

Taishan village landed on the map of contemporary art because of *Chaile Travel's* leader and coordinator Weng Fen. Using photography, he has been documenting urban expansion across China, which began with major cities along the southeastern coast and moved towards northern and then central China. His *Sitting on the Wall* series that he began in 2001 is an iconic representation of a rapidly developing China; one work in this series was used as the poster image for several major exhibitions of contemporary Chinese art staged in the power cities of the international art world, including Paris and New York. Most of Weng Fen's art responds to the changing living environment and the larger socio-political and economic climate that underlie these changes. Concerned with the potential danger of an overdeveloped Chinese economy in a globalized world and the literal overbuilding of China, he has constructed miniature cities using intact eggshells as the primary material. In the series *Accumulating Eggs Project—Weng Peijun's Terrific New World*, a Chinese idiom, *wei ru lei luan* ("as precarious as piling up eggs") is literally visualized with buildings made of eggs that may collapse at anytime.

In 2007, Weng Fen discovered that the force of rural redevelopment was reaching his ancestral hometown, Taishan village, where many of his relatives

Top: Weng Fen, *Sitting on the Wall—Shenzhen 1*, 2002, photograph, 125 x 160 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Middle: Weng Fen, *Accumulating the Eggs Project—Weng Peijun's Terrific New World*, 2005, installation, 400 x 800 x 90 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Bottom: Poster being installed for the exhibition *Alors, la chine*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2003. Bottom right: Poster for the exhibition *New Chinese Photography*, International Center of Photography, New York, 2004. Courtesy of the artist.



still live. Villagers in this remote countryside were notified that a considerable portion of the village was to be requisitioned for redevelopment programs and they were to be relocated from their hometown, where generations of families had lived for centuries. There were mixed feelings among the villagers; some were happy with the compensation paid for their move and eager to start a new life in a location that was more convenient and closer to the urban centres, while others disliked having to leave a familiar community and were unhappy with the low price paid to requisition their land as well as with the process that unfolded with doing this. Weng Fen turned his camera to his ancestral hometown, a place he himself had neglected for years. Issues related to the conflict between the legacy of rural tradition and the force of urbanization became a main concern of his intellectual inquiry as he set off to photograph local villagers, their soon-to-be demolished homes, and the natural scenery of this region. At the beginning, his effort to photograph this region probably arose from an instinctive need to record his birthplace before its inevitable disappearance. Nonetheless, his initial observation and investigation of the region familiarized Weng Fen with a concrete and problem-driven situation against which *Chaile Travel* would take shape shortly thereafter.

In 2008, artist Liu Jun, Weng Fen's colleague at Hainan University, joined him in the effort to investigate and call attention to a place that was to change significantly. A professor who teaches architecture and urban design, Liu Jun also researches how urbanization is unfolding, how it is reshaping the relationship between residents and their living environment, and how to read the difference between official rhetoric of the local government and the actual experience of people who are affected. Together, they organized the very first trip that would later become the signature of *Chaile Travel*.

It is important to note that the founders of *Chaile Travel* are not a group of artists who are hopelessly nostalgic and utterly against any development or changes. On the contrary, the artists realize the necessity of development as a part of human society that will bring change.⁹ However, they wish to create a forum where people are urged to think about the best ways to achieve the desired progress and how to maintain a balance between development and tradition, between natural evolution and human intervention. In an introduction to *Chaile Travel*, the artists state that their goal of founding this interactive art project is to “think over, from the perspective of art, problems and changes that rural tradition is facing in the process of modernization and urbanization.”¹⁰

A forum that encourages personal experience and intellectual exchange is at the heart of *Chaile Travel* as a contemporary art project. In this undertaking, art is at once a form of communication and a collective endeavour. The art project can be seen both as an indicator of urbanization and an attempt to intervene into its very process. By the spirit of its founding mission, which emphasizes a “thinking process” as an integral component, *Chaile Travel* plans to continue to develop and reinvent itself.¹¹ It is a flexible project, and any direction seems possible since each time the participants will be

Free Territory I, March 13, 2010, Tongguling Mountain, Hainan. Photo: Weng Fen.



different as will be the focus of discussion and reflection as well as the physical interventions (such as the benches) left behind. A possible new development in the near future, according to the organizers, is to build small wooden huts on top of these hills. They will be just huts in primitive conditions without any modern technology, and will be placed far away from each other. These huts will serve as temporary shelter for hikers to stay overnight in solitude, accompanied by nothing but nature, and they will provide an interaction with nature in a friendly way just like the benches. The purpose, like that of *Chaile Travel*, is to create a space where one can experience first hand a rural environment and reflect upon the process of urbanization and its impact upon the future of that location.¹²

Fundamentally, *Chaile Travel* is a project that accentuates the experimental and participative nature of contemporary art and simultaneously inquires into a specific local reality that is part of a massive nationwide movement. As a collaborative artwork, *Chaile Travel* has employed a number of media and approaches, including photography, video, installation, casual conversations, organized discussions, and spontaneous interactions. Its subject matter crosses over different professions and disciplines, according to the broad backgrounds of visitors who participate in the project. The art-making process is carried out as visitors hike along the mountainous paths, install or sit on a bench, take photos, observe the newly constructed rural village, examine different types of local architecture, walk under coconut trees, drink and eat local specialties, and converse with local people and among themselves. The one-day art visit is like a staged performance, only that its actors are themselves performers and audience at the same time.

It is this effort to invent a communal experience and to share reflective thinking among a changing body of participants/audiences, who so far have been predominantly non-art professionals, that gives *Chaile Travel* a unique edge. The desire to incorporate non-specialists in the process of defining meaning and shaping the cause of the artwork more or less counteracts the dominant tendency of the contemporary Chinese art practice in which much project-based concept art seems to concern mostly the response of a small circle of specialists, even though a lot of outsiders could be included

as part of the art making process. Being a self-funded project, it is hard to tell how long *Chaile Travel* will sustain itself or how much impact it could actually bring to the reality of the local. Nonetheless, it has been able to do what it set out to do: to provide a forum for intellectual conversations that are local specific and to employ art as a critical tool for social investigation.

Moreover, to stage such a project in a remote rural village in the southern end of China, far away from the fanfare of the contemporary art headquarters of Beijing, suggests a fresh perspective and points to attractive possibilities. As the political power centre of China, Beijing has all along dominated the flow, both physical and mental, of cultural and artistic currency, and this Beijing-centric mode of cultural interaction has largely shaped the making, thinking, and writing of artistic production in China. Beijing has maximized the best social resources available in China and acquired tremendous symbolic power, all of which only enhance its prestige as the undisputed center of Chinese culture and art where artists want to be.¹³ In a contemporary world where the Euro-American centric point of view has long been challenged, one wonders whether this Beijing centrism can possibly one day be surpassed so that a more diverse landscape of cultural and artistic interactions can be encouraged. *Chaile Travel*, in its effort to bring in people from other parts of China to engage in an artistic discourse that is local specific and away from the center, seems to shed light on the possibility of initiating such a direction.

Notes

- ¹ This research was partially funded by a Faculty Development Grant from the China Institute at California State University, Northridge, in summer 2011. It was presented at the 100th College Art Association Annual Conference in 2012, and the author wishes to thank those who provided comments during the presentation.
- ² In the 11th Five-Year Plan, passed by the 5th Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in October 2005, China proposed to build a new socialist countryside according to the requirements of advanced production, improved livelihood, a civilized social atmosphere, clean and tidy villages, and democratic administration. For more relevant discussions, see "The New Socialist Countryside," *China Daily*, October 10, 2012, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-10/20/content_11436582.htm.
- ³ The character *chai* is no longer conspicuous in major cities, with the completion of massive reconstruction, but it is still prominent in the so-called secondary cities and rural areas that are chosen for urban-rural integration programs.
- ⁴ Shenghe Liu et al, "Scenario Analysis on Urbanization and Rural-Urban Migration in China," interim report IR-03-036 (International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Vienna, Austria, 2003), www.iiasa.ac.at/Publications/Documents/IR-03-036.pdf.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Xingqing Ye, "China's Urban-Rural Integration Policies," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 38, no. 4, 117–43.
- ⁷ Shenghe Liu et al, "Scenario Analysis."
- ⁸ The Sixteenth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, in 2002, marked the turning point. For the first time it was declared that socioeconomic development must incorporate urban and rural areas alike. Following this, successive government documents have laid out a series of goals intended to promote urban-rural integration in China.
- ⁹ This statement is drawn from conversations the author had with these artists during the one-day art trip in and around Taishan vilalge on June 18, 2011.
- ¹⁰ *Chaile Travel* blog: "Introduction to *Chaile Travel*," <http://chailetravel.blog.163.com/blog/static/189233039201152385010226>.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Based on conversations with the *Chaile Travel* artists on June 18, 2011.
- ¹³ Artist migration, which accounted for the emergence of artist villages and contemporary art communities in China and which characterized the development of contemporary Chinese art, has been predominantly Beijing-ward.