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**The assessment of artistic and educational resume and doctoral thesis of Mr. Mingda Du entitle 'Remote Context – analysis of own works on the basis of the coexistence experience with alien cultures'. In the area of art, in discipline performing arts and art conservation, started in the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław.**

Mr Mingda Du was born on 03 December 1986 in Henan in China.

He studied:

2005-2010 BA, Tianjin, academy of Fine Arts, China

2011-2012 Erasmus exchange, Bauhaus-University Weimar, Germany

2010-2012 MFA, University for the Creative Arts, Canterbury, Great Britain

2018-2021 doctoral candidate, The Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design, Poland.

The doctoral student has significant artistic resume, including individual and collective exhibitions, he also took part in numerous symposiums, conferences and workshops. He has organizational and educational activity. A detailed list is in his documentation and I will not provide it here. I only mention that there are four individual and nineteen collective exhibitions in China, Poland, Great Britain, Germany and Estonia. This international aspect of work is worth underlining and it explains the choice of the subject of the doctoral thesis.

The assessment of the doctoral thesis:

The doctoral thesis consists of two chapters which describe two separate artistic practices. These practices examine the borders of individual cognition during contact with alien culture. Personal experience of 'plunging in subjective interpretations of situations'<sup>1</sup> provoke the artist

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<sup>1</sup> Minga Du doctoral thesis

to create a number of works, which aim to rediscover his own cultural identity. Two completely different series of works are created.

Part one – ‘Unfamiliar experience’.

The text has a form of an essay, which is more suitable for this kind of project. Acquiring new experience inspires to self-reflection on being oneself again in a different culture, at the beginning discovering new lands with hope and excitement and later with tension and fear. This collision of cultures, which are similar superficially and deep inside extremely different, forms canvas on which theoretical work is built. A number of situations, which appear to be usual, may be a reason for incomprehension and dismay. Just as in the movie by Sophia Coppola ‘Lost in translation’, quoted by the author, contact with a different culture causes in heroes intensification of insecurity and loneliness. The quoted conversation of the main characters, which in fact does not take place in a lift, but it is quoted faithfully. However, I cannot agree with the statement, that the aim of the film is to show foreigner’s perspective, this standpoint is rather strongly contrasting background, just to show clearly desperate loneliness of the characters. My analysis of the film is definitely influenced by specificity of my culture, which may lead to different interpretations.

I have never been forced to find myself, just like the author, in a completely different culture, although I can recall situations I had to face when meeting foreigners or during my trips. In my teaching work, I have contact with students from China, so some aspects mentioned by Mingda are recognized by me. Understanding the author’s view is not easy, but it is the key to his work.

*We usually feel good in our part of the world. Everyday life is well-known. This reality means a toast for breakfast and need to appear at work on time. Learnt skills are natural for us just like breathing. First of all, we are knowledgeable and this is the main source of self-confidence. We know where we are and we know the way to the nearest shop.<sup>2</sup>*

Routine actions do not usually require from us analysis. Arrival to a different country and different culture changes radically the perspective. Our reaction tells a lot about ourselves. The view of the doctoral student is an interesting interpretation. The assumption of giving up previous habits and customs and undergoing unaware actions seems to be the most interesting part of this work. Such doings are not new in the history of art or culture. I find here an analogy with automatic writing by André Bretón as the way to releasing creative awareness or works of Austrian painter Arnulf Rainer who says:

*In 1949, at the age of 20, I started drawing with my eyes closed. My faith in previous art died. I reached point zero [...] I became interested in the ideology of mental automatism coming from surrealism. I allowed myself to deviate into a different idea, I put it under all impulses, which are inside me, I tried to understand my own thoughts, desires and needs.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan *Przestrzeń i miejsce* PIW Warszawa 1987 str. 248

<sup>3</sup> Otto Breicha, Arnulf Rainer: *Hirndrang - Selbstkommentare und andere Texte zu Werke und Person* mit 118 Bildbeigaben, Salzburg, 1980, s. 166.

Although the way is already known, it is its very personal tone which decides about originality and uniqueness of this piece of art. This individual creative project leads to creating a collection of strange ceramic works, which are described by the doctoral student in this way:

*The work created in this situation often surprises me, the author himself, with a sense of strangeness and distance, rather than naturally establishing a sense of intimacy like those previous planned works.*<sup>4</sup>

The author does not make any sketches or initial assumptions. Durative character of the work constitutes its strength. This is an inspired and dynamic process. All methods and processes are essential. Earlier manual and workshop preparation and a huge knack in ceramic work are visible. It is not possible to get away from it completely or hide it and thanks to this easiness in operating the material, it is possible to focus on internal dialogue and following the intuition freely.

Continuance of the project in time is a path to knowledge, spiritual dialogue of the artist with himself. This peculiar universe of autonomous forms, colours and resolutions.

Surprising single objects are notations of states of mind at the moment. Some of them could be regarded as attractive independent sculptures. However, according to the author's intention, we have to look at them and analyze them as a whole.

Eighty-seven ceramic objects closes a lot of time inside, a lot of important and less important events.

*The importance of events in anyone's life is rather directly proportional to their intensity than to duration. A travel round the world may take a year and not leave any special impressions. And a glance at woman's face which lasts a second may change the whole future.*<sup>5</sup>

In the work 'Unfamiliar experience' individual weight of feelings and events decides about its importance.

The second chapter is closely connected with the situation caused by lockdown due to Covid-19 and global confusion connected with pandemics.

All of us were affected by lockdown and the computer screen was wide open to the world and we were under illusion, that we can see and find everything on the Internet. In reality we could only see what Google wanted to show us. It does not change the situation that we have too much information.

The second part of the dissertation and the second part of practical work entitled 'Headlines' describe such a situation and react to it. Overwhelming and various information cause insecurity in conflicting views and this leads the author to resignation from privileged confrontational position of an artist and an attempt to stand on the side, rather in the position of a neutral observer.

Repainting websites is a spontaneous reaction at the beginning, but in a moment it becomes a bigger project, which develops into an artistic concept of a doctoral thesis.

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<sup>4</sup> Minga Du doctoral thesis p. 14

<sup>5</sup> James K. Feibelman *Philosophers Lead Sheltered Lives* London 1952 p. 55

I feel that it is not only copying, but rather effective interpretation. Resignation from colour and the way the tool is used remind me of sketches of still life, which are prepared by a painter before painting a picture.

Free performance of sketches by hand, ink on paper has some intention.

I do not know whether it is a deliberate action starting work on the first of April. In our culture April Fool's Day is a day when people play pranks, what is more media often participate in this tradition and provide false information on purpose.

Even if it is a coincidence, it is significant, especially concerning the text, which brings the work 'Comedian' by Maurizio Cattelan. Questions about art boundaries appear, there are mentioned examples of Marcel Duchamp or Zeng Zaocai – an artist from Hong Kong. I wonder if the second part of the doctoral thesis is an ambiguous play with a viewer in hiding and blurring meanings.

Blurring appears in art as a significant artistic concept, it was used by such artists like Jackson Pollock or Robert Rauschenberg, The most significant example is blurring the drawing of de Kooning by Rauschenberg in 1953.

In a doctoral thesis we can find an example of the artist Zeng Zaocai, who blurs his work advertising splendid action of cleaning detergents.

Just like in the project 'Unknown Experience' the author flows with current of his initiated project. Repainting websites becomes everyday reality. The creator tries to keep neutral state of the mind and impartiality. He declares, that since he does not know quoted languages, his work does not bring any semantic meanings.

If the author had lived in the communist times and had contact with censorship, he would not have unshaken certainty that nobody would want to make every effort and translate all quoted headlines just to make sure they do not contain forbidden content.

Overlapping infinite news is in fact blurring it. Still life becomes here dead news. But it can also be a clever way of hiding some information. Looking at the work 'Headlines' we automatically look for familiar words or faces. It is probable that some word or phrase comes out and it may change completely the meaning of the work.

This condition is used by Jadwiga Sawicka in her art in an excellent way. She paints sensational headlines from newspapers. Written pictures are created 'Kills Again', 'Doctor's Case', 'Thief, Thief', which evoke disorientation and fear. Regardless of possible interpretations, it is undeniable that we deal with a mature and mindful artist, who doubts and asks questions. Curiosity and self-reflection drive their action and this kind of stand guarantees constant, persisting development.

#### Conclusion:

The presented output allows for honest assessment. The candidate for a doctoral degree is characterized by an original approach to his own art. The presented work is supported by deep reflection combined with research passion oriented to searching. The doctoral thesis in both theoretical and practical part is an interesting, compact unit, which implements thesis, established in the description, consistently and in an unusual way. The presented work confirms knowledge and skills of leading independent artistic, experimental and educational work.

In view of the above, I share the positive opinion of the supervisor prof. Małgorzata Warlikowska and auxiliary supervisor dr Michał Puszczyński and I find that the doctoral thesis of Mr. Mingda Du entitled 'Remote Context - analysis of own works on the basis of the coexistence experience with alien cultures', submitted for review, meets all statutory requirements. I apply, with complete confidence, to the Artistic Discipline Council of the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław, for awarding the degree of doctor to Mr. Mingda Du.

Manek Jakuszewski