

The Art of Convergence: The Dichotomies of Zhang Hongtu

Presented by Anna Perrone

Argument

This paper argues that Zhang Hongtu's works *Guo Xi–Van Gogh* (1998), *Mai Dang Lao (McDonalds)* (2002), *Six Pack of Kebou-Kele (Coca-Cola)* (2002), and *The Last Banquet* (1989) sought to generate a visual culture which envisions the Chinese and Euro-American relationship as both layered and profitable within the art market. In this research I ask the important question of Zhang's use of his "Chineseness" for economic profit or distinguished self-identity?

"Daring to breed the horse with the cow" - Zhang Hongtu

Road Map

Foundations: Zhang Hongtu Early Life

Exploration: Four Works by Zhang Hongtu

Focus: *The Last Banquet*

Economic Gains: Chinese Contemporary Art Market

Conclusion: Impact and Importance of Zhang Hongtu

Foundations: Early Life of Zhang Hongtu

Born in the year 1943 in the Gansu Province of China

Zhang was pushed to the periphery as “other” for his religious identity
and outwardly devout parents.

Moved to New York City from Beijing in 1982

Started Creating “Repeated Shan Shui Series” in 1998

Mai Dang Lao (McDonalds)

Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 BCE)



Fig. 1

Zhang Hongtu, *Mai Dang Lao (McDonalds)*, 2002. Cast bronze. sandwich container
<https://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/41982>.

Six Pack of Kebou-Kele (Coco-Cola)

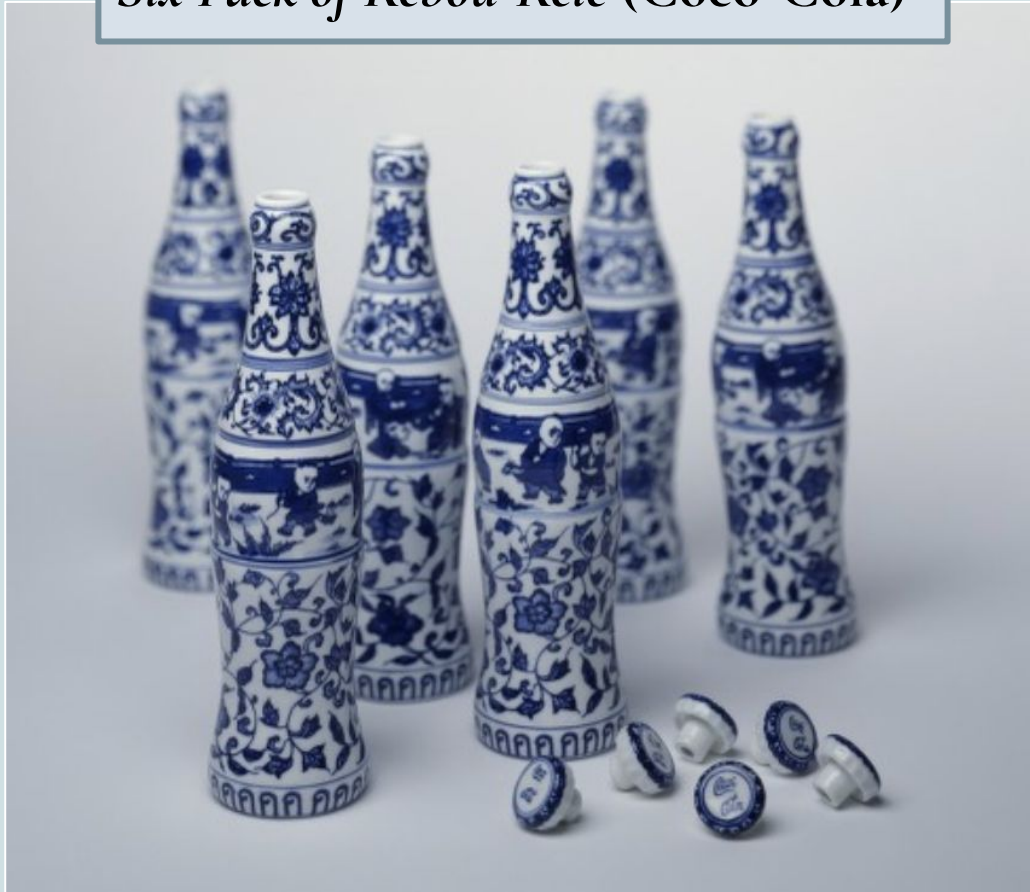


Fig.2

Guo Xi–Van Gogh

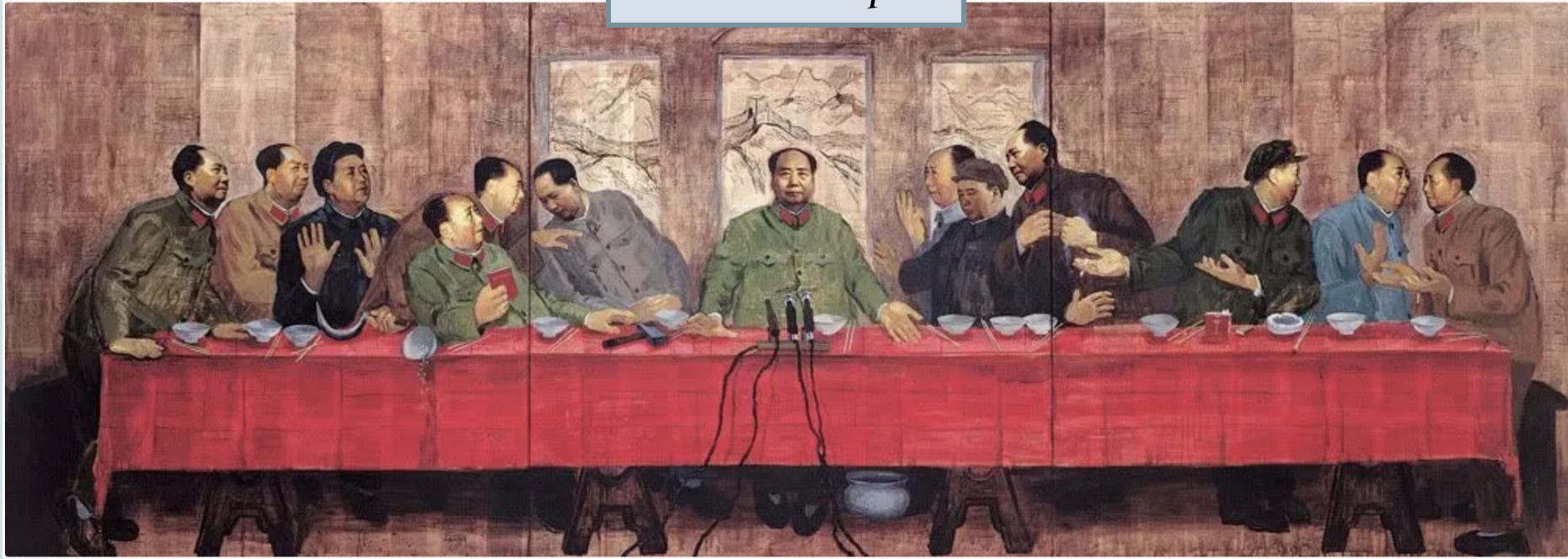
shan shui hua =
mountain water painting



Chinese characters:
(Shan) 山 (Shui) 水

Fig.3

The Last Banquet



Zhang Hongtu, *The Last Banquet*, 1989, Laser prints, pages from the Little Red Book, and acrylic on canvas, <https://arthur.io/art/zhang-hongtu/last-banquet>

Fig. 4

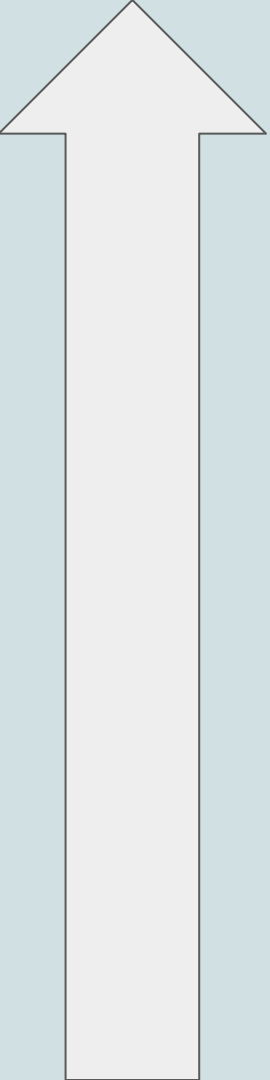


Chinese Contemporary Art Market

Chinese Contemporary Art market value in:
1990 = base of near zero.
2007 = \$272 million

2007 China surpassed Canada to become
largest source of US imports

The Last Banquet was originally priced in 1990
at \$4,000 and five years later
sold for \$50,000



Impact and Importance of Zhang Hongtu

Zhang's pieces are about process, confronting internal biases, and acknowledging cultural differences that both tie and differentiate people. Through his works, audiences see Zhang's imaginative interaction with the world around him, leaning into the freedom of expression he sought for himself in 1982, when he came to New York in search of knowledge and new artistic agency. Such agency allowed Zhang to find space within this 'otherness' and accomplish works of art which remain internationally celebrated and studied.

QUESTIONS