

**THE ORIGINS OF CHINA'S BEAT:
CHINESE CONTEMPORARY SOUND ART (2000-2019)**

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INTRODUCTION

Culture is not a segmented and compartmentalized system. It is composed of flows and backflows of influence and inspirations across different disciplines, which often overlap and are virtually indistinguishable from one another. Therefore, it is valuable to observe disciplines bordering with Chinese electronic music to better inform our understanding of it. One case of such “neighboring” disciplines is indeed sound art, which undoubtedly influenced electronic music in China, and in its most underground manifestations, even overlapped with it.

During the 2019 Amsterdam Dance Event (ADE), a globally recognised music conference and festival, the attention was on various established sound artists blurring the line between art and electronic music. Such artists include Shelly Knotts, and Timo Hoogland, which on October 17, 2019 at Compagnietheater, Amsterdam, performed an Algorave, a rave in which human DJs code the music in real time and “embrace the alien sounds of raves from the past, and introduce alien, futuristic rhythms and beats made through strange, algorithm-aided processes.”¹ The inclusion of such performances in an electronic music festival and conference, clearly testifies the overlapping and reciprocal influence of these two creative fields.

This research aims at sketching an overview of the origins and evolution of the Chinese sound art scene, by defining sound art, describing its forefathers and first steps, frame its development in China, present a selection of Chinese sound artists based on the main Chinese trends, and finally highlighting the leading Chinese platforms and labels supporting the scene.

Sound art is an artistic practice in which sound is the primary medium. However, in most cases, it is only part of a larger interdisciplinary and multimedia artwork. This loose definition of sound art is, in fact, symptomatic of the fact that sound art is at the intersection of contemporary art and music, both as written word and sound vibration. Nonetheless, many contemporary sound artists refuse to be labeled as such, since they claim it is demeaning for their practice to be categorized. At the same time, some critics argue that other practices not traditionally included in the fine arts, such as electronic music, fall under the umbrella of sound art. Thus it is clear that the term is very subjective and volatile. This research, however, will be solely focusing on art in which sound is the primary focus and primary medium, made by artists self-identifying as sound artists.²

¹ “Awe-inspiring sound making during ADE Sound Lab's night program,” Amsterdam Dance Event, October 10, 2019, <https://www.amsterdam-dance-event.nl/en/news/awe-inspiring-sound-making-at-ade-sound-labs-night-program/61186/>.

² Christoph Cox, “Christoph Cox – History of Sound Art,” Barnes Foundation, January 30, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hh_5_CAYsXY.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORY

Contemporary electronic music was born out of the sound experimentations and taken up first by the avant-garde artists of the last century. They used electronic (and not) noises as a new way to express meaning and to instill wonder, in the form of sounds of computational devices and machinery, or simply of the world around them. The first modern manifestations of sound art didn't include electronic noises: for instance, the first sound artwork is attributed by some to Futurist Luigi Russolo, the *Intonarumori* (1913) or "noise intoner," a recording of the urban sounds of a city undergoing industrial mechanization. This innovative art practice was picked up by Dadaist, Fluxus, and postmodern artists and poets during the following decades, such as Pierre Schaeffer, John Cage, Halim El-Dabh, Max Neuhaus, Robert Morris, Alvin Lucier, Marianne Amacher. Most noteworthy were Cage and Neuhaus; whereas the earlier theorized the creation of a tape with no sound on, the *Silent Prayer* (never realized), to trick the audience into listening closely to the actual sounds surrounding them, the latter was the first artist to bring sound art in the performance space as we know it today. His first sound-based performance, *Listen* (1966), also became a sound installation in 1968. The first recorded use of electronic sounds in art installations was in the 70s, by artists such as La Monte Young, Tania Mouraud, Keith Sonnier and Nicolas Collins. In the 1990s the term "sound art" was coined to define such artistic production. Out of this fertile cultural ground, the 80s saw the emergence of the electro-acoustic music genre, along with other new fields of artistic research such as phonography or field recording, sound walking, sound politics, and sound cinema. More recently, the difference between sound art and avant-garde music became increasingly more difficult to define, to the point that today it is often hard to clearly tell them apart. In contemporary times, noteworthy sound artists are Christine Sun Kim, Jana Winderen, Emeka Ogboh, Akio Suzuki, Dont Rhine, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, and Christina Kubisch. Nonetheless, sound art is still an underrecognized and under researched artistic discipline, given that Susan Philipsz's *Lowlands* was the first sound artwork to ever win a major art prize with the 2010 British Turner Prize.³

The Chinese sound art scene developed relatively late: in fact, some art historians tend to set the beginning of the contemporary art period in China around 1979, when the artists were first exposed to non-Chinese art theories. Others set its beginning even as late as the 1990s. Therefore, this delay in the development of sound art is not surprising. All the same, the Chinese scene developed into one of the most fertile and dynamic grounds for sound art, as testified by the wide range of sound art genres: extreme noise, musique concrete, electro-acoustic, field recording, mixer feedback, circuit-bending, interactive controller, live audio-visual, glitch, minimal

³ Cox, "History of Sound Art."

electro, gallery-based sound art, free improvisation, etc.. However, as Yao Dajuin, founder of the Post-Concrete sound art label puts it:

“under today’s ‘we-have-everything’ surface of experimental sound in China, the energy and diversity of which have been much appreciated recently in the West by critics, magazine editors, and audiences, something is a bit anachronistic, or out of context, with the global progress.”⁴

What he argues is that there are indeed positive aspects in Chinese sound artists “re-inventing the wheel” by destroying and rebuilding the original system they observed from Western sound artists. However, both because of the recent development of the field in China and the break with Chinese musical tradition during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), skipping the modernist phase of the development of sound art in China, could prove itself to be dangerous for its long-term development. Indeed, China had a very long sound art history preceding what Westerners define as such: ancient texts such as Ji Kang’s (260 C.E.) and the Yue Ji - records of music (10 B.C.E.), alongside with refined architectural acoustic techniques are witnesses to a very mature Chinese musical aesthetic, interrupted during the Cultural Revolution, which is only now starting to be tapped by scholars and artists.⁵

The beginning of sound art in china is pinpointed in the year 2000, with the “Sound” exhibition at the China Contemporary Art Gallery (formerly the CAFA Museum), curated by Li Zhenhua and featuring three artists experimenting with sound art. However, they were not purely sound artists: it happened to be mostly visual artists producing sound art as part of their multimedia works, but not focusing specifically on sound aesthetics. Featured artists Shi Qing’s *Spoken Language Stage* and Wang Wei’s *70kg + 3.2m3*, were essentially video installations, whereas Zhang Hui’s *Lost Voice* closeded more on actual field recording installation. A more mature exhibition on the topic, “Sound of Enlightenment”, also known as “Sound 2” was curated in 2001 by Qiu Zhijie and Li Zhenhua: here the largest part of the exhibition was indeed pure sound art, harmonizing in what Qiu defined “an exhibition of cacophony.”⁶ This was a breakthrough because it also included, for the first time, sound art performances by experimental musicians such as Feng Jiangzhou and FM3. This exhibition showed a heavy influence by the Post-Sense Sensibility movement, through the involvement of Qiu Zhijie, and the participation of Li Yong and Wang Wei, all members of this art movement. The year 2003 was also a turning point: “China: the Sonic Avant-Garde,” the first Chinese experimental sound compilation, was produced in the United States by the label Post-Concrete. At the same time, the label’s founder, Yao Dajuin was also producing the first international sound and media art festival in China, “Sounding Beijing,” creating the first platform for sound artists to meet on.⁷ The year 2006 featured “Sound From the Far Shore” as part of the Dashanzi International Art Festival, and 2007 Get it Louder section “Curry Show.” In 2008, the Shanghai eArts Festival included a performance called “Streaming Objects,” as a deluxe edition of the original Beijing “Sounding.” In 2011, Yao Dajuin curated “Sounding Hangzhou” at the

⁴ Dajuin Yao, “Revolutions Per Minute: Sound Art China,” (2013)
<http://revolutionsperminutefest.org/SoundArtChina/#project-name-modal-1>.

⁵ Yao, “Revolutions Per Minute.”

⁶ Aimee Lin, “Stop-and-Go: Sound Art in Mainland China” Translated by Billy Tang, *LEAP*, September 16, 2012
<http://www.leapleapleap.com/2012/09/stop-and-go-sound-art-in-mainland-china/>.

⁷ Yao, “Revolutions Per Minute.”

School of Inter Media Art at the China Academy of Art, and Li Zhenhua curated a performance by Wu Quan for Goethe-Institut's "40 years of German Video Art" causing the field to have a new and temporary resurgence.⁸ From the perspective of the artistic production, since the early 2000s, and mostly thanks to open-source online musical access of the first decades of this century, the field really flourished diversifying into different sound art styles. The following chapter includes an overview including some selected of such trends among Chinese sound artists.

⁸ Lin, "Stop-and-Go."

CHAPTER 2: CHINESE TRENDS

China has been for almost two decades a fertile ground for sound art to prosper on. Thus the amount of artists and artistic diversity in style and themes, makes it difficult to pinpoint which were the major trends and effectively categorize them. In the following chapter, one can find an overview of only one of the many possible ways to read, classify and define the Chinese contemporary sound artistic production. Therefore this is not an absolute definition of artists as belonging to a certain trend, nor it is in any way an invalidation of the artistic production of the artists who were not mentioned. Nonetheless, one can easily identify three trends in Chinese sound art, as follows.

2.1 PHONOGRAPHY

Phonography or field recording, occupies a very predominant position in Chinese sound art, almost taking over the role of documentary films. However, it does not focus on the rendition of reality as it does in the West, but the artist's interest is purely about the fascination with the sounds of modern China themselves in an emotional and intellectual sense.⁹ Because of this reason, it has sometimes been defined as "Confucian," given its emphasis on humanism and the interest in linguistic diversity, due to the richness of diverse Chinese dialects and accents.

In 2001, **Qiu Zhijie**, as an artist, created a solo sound art exhibition in Japan, titled "Sound of Sound" featuring solely silent artworks. This was likely a tribute to John Cage, by taking the same stance in asking the audience to focus on the here and now sounds rather than the artwork. Nevertheless, they do refer to the sound aesthetic in Chinese tradition in writing and language.¹⁰ Qiu Zhijie, as an artist, has since stopped focusing on sound art alone to pursue the amalgamation of different art practices in what he calls "Total Art."¹¹

Yao Dajun's *Geophone Nanking* (2005) makes reference to the lost Chinese sound heritage as well. The sound installation employs the analogy of a "geophone" or *diting* in Chinese, "earth listening." It is a military surveillance system used two millennia ago in battle: a large pottery urn was buried underground and a scout slipped inside to listen for the sound of the enemies digging tunnels. The physical principle behind this phenomenon is known as "Helmholtz resonance." In

⁹ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

¹⁰ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

¹¹ Lin, "Stop-and-Go."

the exhibition space, *Geophone Nanking* was presented as a large black box in which the audience could sit in pitch-black darkness and listen to a field recording collage from Nanjing. The artist is thus able to employ sound art in installation to weave a thread uniting past and present while deeply rooted on the geographical identification of the historical and present location, Nanjing.¹²

Sun Wei, Chengdu local, is renown for his *Song for 100 Children* (2006), a performance/installation. The work consists of two Chinese printing machines, which are fed a text of the lyrics of the homonymous Sichuan folk song. The printing sound is digitally recorded, modulated, and amplified. The outcome is a spectacular, psychedelic music, despite its "traditional" source input. The artist was able to translate the Sichuanese traditional song into a modern, electronic sound, due to the printing process, which indeed is unique to that specific song's document. This sound is therefore maintaining a strong connection to its origin, while bringing this tradition forward as a very contemporary, electronic sound.¹³

Zhong Minjie and **Li Zhiying** are part of a phonographic collective, PlayBack Unit from Guangzhou, whose mission is to extensively document the city's acoustic environment. They once even posed as customers in a "massage parlour" wearing recording devices. In their artistic practice, they tend to violate personal privacy by shamelessly listening to private phone calls and recording in private spaces, granting their audience "voyeuristic" audio access to otherwise socially forbidden spaces.¹⁴ Between 2006-2007, they also ran a blog where they posted the latest recordings. These artists are working as phonographic artists in the most traditional, documentary way: however the sheer number of their recordings alone, makes this an extremely valuable research.¹⁵

A clear case of focus on modern China is **Yan Jun's** art practice, first Chinese artist to win the honorary mention Ars Electronica prize for media arts in 2011, with his *Music for Listening on the Earth* (2008-2009) piece: the artwork consists of "micro-sounds" from the building where Yan Jun's previous work, *Wormhole* (2008), was installed, such as human movement, gurgling of the water pipes, air flow, and other noises that were recorded by contact microphones strategically placed.¹⁶ After modulation and noise reduction, these recordings were released as the above mentioned artwork, making these micro-sounds accessible to human ears. Furthermore, by modulating them in order to make them otherworldly, the artist also aroused in the audience a sense of alienation from everyday sounds.¹⁷

¹² Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

¹³ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

¹⁴ Alvin Li, "The State of Sound Art in China," *LEAP*, February 22, 2016, <http://www.leapleapleap.com/2016/02/the-state-of-sound-art-practice-in-china/>.

¹⁵ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

¹⁶ "Yan Jun - Music for Listening on the Earth," Ars Electronica Prix, accessed October 22, 2019. <http://archive.aec.at/prix/showmode/41613/>.

¹⁷ Xue Tan, "Chinese Sound Art Gets Recognition From The International Media Arts Scene" *Vice*, June 16, 2011, https://www.vice.com/en_au/article/aejaaj/chinese-sound-art-gets-recognition-from-the-international-media-arts-scene

2.2 POLITICAL

Some see sound art as a potentially highly critical form of sound art. However, as Yao Dajun puts it:

“The political element is rarely found in sound art in China. And the reading of the Chinese harsh noise scene as critical protest would prove to be too simplistic and naive. The artists in general are not overly interested in politics, and even for those who are, sound art would not be their channel of expression. It's not so much the overall climate of censorship as a shared sense of futility and apathy in the post-1989 era.”¹⁸

Indeed, some artists claim their artworks are political but are often more theoretical than critical, addressing the era or society rather than a specific target. Therefore, especially if devoid of lyrics, sound art is rarely censored.

The **Torturing Nurse** band from Shanghai is the most typical example of extreme noise act: extreme performances including explicit and sexual clothing and even hot wax dripping on their bodies while on stage, such as in their 2007 performance. To a critical eye, it seems obvious that it is indeed a controversial artwork which, in normal circumstances, would be under close scrutiny. The only clear reason for which they maintained themselves devoid of censorship was the limited reach and size of the events they hosted.¹⁹

Edwin Lo dedicated *Mourn* (2011) to Hong Kong's annual mourning of the "June Fourth" event. He used TV broadcasts of the gatherings, manipulating them to subtly intervene with the listener's time and space. The artist is then clearly creating a shared audio collective memory and mourning space, while still editing the work to present his critical angle on the tragedy.²⁰

Hwang Dawang and **Zhang You-Sheng's** *Minkoku Hyakunen* - "100 Years of the Republic of China" (2011) is the most obvious case of political criticism in sound art. It is a political satire on the Taiwan nationalist government, which was then celebrating its 100th birthday, using invasive field recording, where the artists comment and "act" on the various scenes. A noteworthy highlight is the segment where they record a military band playing the Taiwan national anthem, while the artists/recordists begin to wail as if at a funeral. The Japanese title itself, asserts their rejection for the ruling Nationalist Chinese party. It even contains a pun on the word "100 years" also meaning "to pass away." The political use of field recording earned them an Honorable Mention award in Prix Ars Electronica, 2012.²¹

¹⁸ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

¹⁹ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

²⁰ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

²¹ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

The Hong Kong-based **Samson Young**, is also one explicitly political sound artists: his work *Liquid Border* (2012) in Chinese "Violence Border", uses contact microphones to record the sounds of the fences in the forbidden zones between Hong Kong and Mainland China.²² In *Pastoral Music* (2015), he reviewed six hours of footage of US bombings in the Middle East on mute, recreating the war sounds with a set of unlikely instruments.²³ He took part in 2016 Art Basel with *Canon* (2016), a performance in which, atop of a booth-sized cube, the artist in police uniform activated a sonic weapon used to disperse crowds at protests, the Long Range Acoustic Device (LRAD). At maximum volume, the machine can induce permanent hearing damage. However, Young performed a series of low-volume sessions, also used to repel birds, to mesmerize the audience. These artworks all clearly indicate an art practice focusing on the sounds of violence and sounds as violence, posing highly critical and political questions to the audience.²⁴

2.3 DIGITAL

In China there is a special attention to the internet and smartphones as source of noise, with specific interest to social media platforms, the medium, and once again the social elements behind them. Most recently the focus shifted to User Generated Content platforms, highlighting a change of roles from audience as such to audience as collective producers of sounds.

Xu Cheng in the mid 2000s made detailed recordings of online chat room conversations and net broadcasts, including topics ranging from underground Christian sermons to S/M bondage master classes. These works dig into and open up the internet as an acoustic source, whereas it is usually considered only as a carrier of such files. Thus it enables a new aesthetic and conceptual perspective on the overflow of data uploaded everyday on the internet. The artworks also happen to appear as controversial because of the buried world they uncover, such as the erotic chatrooms.²⁵

Jiang Zhuyun performed a phone-based work *Start with Wei* - "start with hello" (2005) in which he had two cellphones set up so that one's mouthpiece would be next to the earpiece and vice versa. He then dialed two random numbers and recorded the spontaneous, yet dysfunctional, dialogues which took place. He thus enabled two strangers to connect and unknowingly engage in a conversation with an equally confused counterpart, causing the two to doubt, for a second, the reality they were presented with, and generating in them and the audience a sense of alienation, while randomly including strangers in the artwork.²⁶

²² Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

²³ Alyssa Buffenstein, "12 Sound Artists Changing Your Perception of Art," *Artnet*, August 4, 2016, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/12-sound-artists-changing-perception-art-587054>.

²⁴ Hili Perlson, "Shooting Star Samson Young to Represent Hong Kong at the 2017 Venice Biennale," *Artnet*, July 14, 2016, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/samson-young-represent-hong-kong-2017-venice-biennale-557369>.

²⁵ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

²⁶ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

Zhang Anding took the idea of virtual soundscape one step further. With *vPods* (2007) he created fake iPods with preset tracks installed. In an effort to push the internet soundscape even further, he created *i•MIRROR* (2008) which presents a soundscape created from field sounds recorded in the then-trendy virtual world platform Second Life (www.secondlife.com). The artist is thus the first one to create virtual phonographies of a digitally-designed world.²⁷

Zhang Liming is an artist that worked with social media scapes, and set up the *Harbin Sound Map* (2008) an open web sound project that allows users to post and share their own recordings based on their geographical location. Therefore, the artist combines space and sound to visually and sonically map the city, thus creating a unique spatial archive of phonographies that develops independently from its creator.²⁸

Wei Wei's performance *iPhone Improvisation* (2012), consists in an experiment in which she attaches various transducers to an iPhone. Then, she performs various physical actions as well as digital actions on the smartphone, thus recording a stream of physical and digital noises. The artist thus is proposing to use a smartphone as an actual instrument, by both physically and digitally playing it, but also allowing it to autonomously "improvise" given the unforeseeable combination of sounds the phone's components would produce.²⁹

2.4 OTHER

The sheer number of sound artists in China makes it impossible to effectively categorize all of the past and current trends of Chinese sound music. However, find listed below some specific noteworthy mentions of artists with different takes on sound art.

The *Buddha Machine* (2005) was created by electronica duo **FM3 (Christian Virant and Zhang Jian)** using cheap, mass-produced, Buddhist prayer machines. The artists replaced the buddhist chanting with FM3's own electronic ambient tracks. Not only the concept was successful, but the marketability of the artwork for mass consumption, positions it as a jokingly critical look at Chinese mass production culture and superficial religiousness.³⁰

Liang Shaoji's *Listening to the Silkworm* (2006), is an artwork in which the audience can listen to the otherwise inaudible live sounds silkworms produce throughout their life cycle. The artist presents the narrative of Chinese traditional meanings of the silkworms and its metaphorical connection to Chinese society, united by the cyclicity of development, peaking and downfall that they have in common. Liang Shaoji also poetically shows the conflict polluting human life in raw

²⁷ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

²⁸ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

²⁹ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

³⁰ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

silk threads and offers an ideal shelter from modern violence through the identification with the cocoons and the focus on the almost inaudible sounds they produce.³¹

Wang Changcun's *Antechre* (2007) live performance in Shanghai and its subsequent release in Post-Concrete's "Archival Vinyl" series is an interesting take on Chinese copy culture as related to sound. The name and content both hint at the British electronica duo Autechre, specifically their *Untilted* CD. Wang's performance was intentionally presented as one of the many widely popular bootlegs of the real band Autechre's performance. The similarity was painstakingly accurate, down to the perfect copy of made-up bootleg lineage listing, the pauses of the recording, and the audience applause. He thus "tricked" consumers into listening to his performance while looking for the almost homonymous band's performance. The artist is then creating a humorous paradox in which users looking for free illegal music, end up downloading free legal artworks.³²

Weng Wei's *Twice-Cooked Pork* (2012) presents a multimedia work, presenting an interactive sound device and a video projection. The Sichuanese delicacy-derived title refers to a cross-modulation between traditional calligraphy as shown in the projection and the sound of classical Chinese phonemes, controlled in real time by the audience. The technical effort behind the work was, for the time, cutting-edge and complex, involving Max/MSP/Jitter, as well as hardware design.³³

³¹ Lara Mikocky, "The Art of a Silkworm's Weave by Liang Shaoji" *Designboom*, November 22, 2012, <https://www.designboom.com/art/the-art-of-a-silkworms-weave-by-liang-shaoji/>.

³² Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

³³ Yao, "Revolutions Per Minute."

CHAPTER 3: PLATFORMS

An indispensable element for the development of this scene is the presence of established sound art labels and platforms in China. Below is listed a selection of them.

Nojiji/Raying Temple: is one of China's DIY experimental music labels. Focuses on harsh noise, free jazz and warped post rock. The label was created by a small community of self-selected outcasts. The group runs Raying Temple, a DIY performance space/recording studio/bar in Tongzhou, an industrial suburb of Beijing.³⁴

Zoomin' Night Live Recordings: is a now-defunct weekly experimental music showcase located at D-22, in Beijing's university district. Zoomin' used to attract a scene of university students and recent graduates every week. The artists performing there mixed post-punk, No Wave, early Krautrock, Modernist Minimalism and other forms.³⁵

Subjam: subjam.org is the source of many projects of Yan Jun, a pioneer of Chinese sound art. Subjam and its sub-labels Kwanyin Records, Yaji, and Mini-Kwanyin, published a vast catalogue of sound art, including field recordings, concrete poetry, sound art, collections of music writing, independent films, and design books. Subjam has also organized hundreds of live performances and music festivals such as MIJI concerts.³⁶

Post-Concrete: is one of the largest sources of recordings and articles on Chinese sound art and experimental music. Yao Dajun is its founder and custodian, who has extensive connections to mainland artists and can be considered one of the forefathers of the Chinese scene.³⁷

Beijing Sounds: is a website (sinoglot.com) archiving field recordings from Beijing. Its primary focus is linguistic, cataloguing different dialects with detailed explanations of regional variations in pronunciation and vocabulary.³⁸

Pangbianr: pangbianr.com is an online source for discovering avant garde/emerging music from Beijing and elsewhere in China. The archives include audio and video streaming, reviews,

³⁴ Josh Feola, "Global Ear: Beijing Portal" Wire (2011)
https://www.thewire.co.uk/in-writing/the-portal/global-ear_beijing-portal.

³⁵ Feola, "Global Ear."

³⁶ Feola, "Global Ear."

³⁷ Feola, "Global Ear."

³⁸ Feola, "Global Ear."

interviews, and articles about independent Chinese art, music, and film. The platform also organizes performances, screenings and various events in Beijing.³⁹

³⁹ Feola, "Global Ear."

CONCLUSION

It appears that the golden age of Chinese sound art has by now passed and gone, peaking in the mid 2000s and having a short revival in the early 2010s. However, it is undeniable that China has what Yao Dajun defines as an “inexplicable acoustic energy”⁴⁰ which one can only hope will be able to evolve into an innovative force for the field of sound art within and outside China. This innovation, together with new technologies opening up previously unthinkable art forms, and the idiosyncratic situation of Chinese sound aesthetics, might end up sparking a “renaissance” of the Chinese sound art, creating something “out of sync” with the sound art abroad. If that will be the case, this innovation might spill over to underground music first, and mainstream music then, fostering a new generation of artists, equipped with a new, groundbreaking, sound repertoire.

⁴⁰ Yao, “Revolutions Per Minute.”

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