



NOW: A DIALOGUE ON FEMALE CHINESE CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

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Katy Wan reports on a series of exhibitions across the UK that featured the work of Chinese contemporary women artists. These took place between February and September 2018 at Nottingham Contemporary, the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art in Manchester, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art and Turner Contemporary in Margate, and were jointly organised by the Plus Tate network, the China Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, and the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art.

In the pictorial system of Chinese characters, the word 安, denoting 'peace' or 'safety', is composed of a female element situated under a roof, or in a dwelling. This suggests a belief within Chinese culture that peace is best secured by the presence of a woman at home. While Chinese is not the only language in which gender stereotypes abound, this example raises the question of whether it is possible for societies to extricate themselves from archaic belief systems about gender and identity that are embedded in an everyday tool as vital as language.

An attempt to provide an insight into the multiplicity of female identities in Chinese culture took place in 2018 in the form of *NOW: A Dialogue on Female Chinese Contemporary Artists*. This was a programme of exhibitions undertaken by galleries across the UK that looked to celebrate the varied practices of Chinese women artists working today. United under the umbrella theme of gender, the exhibitions were nonetheless individualised to reflect the outreach objectives of their host organisations through strategies of interpretation and display.

In Manchester, the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art presented a group display featuring the work of seven younger-generation artists: Nabuqi (娜布其), Wu Chao (吴超), Yang Guangnan (杨光南), Li Shurui (李姝睿), Luo Wei (罗苇), Hu Xiaoyuan (胡晓媛) and Geng Xue (耿雪). This ran from 16 February to 29 April 2018. The selection of works addressed individual subjectivity as expressed through photography and performance, as well as the power of new technology and media, all explored through complex sculptural installations.