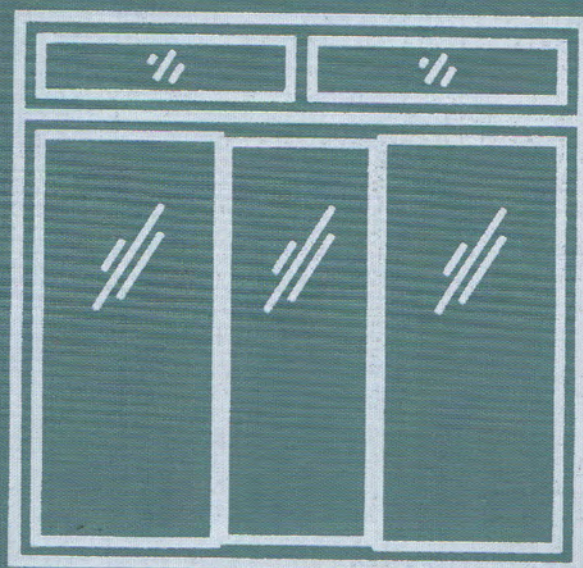


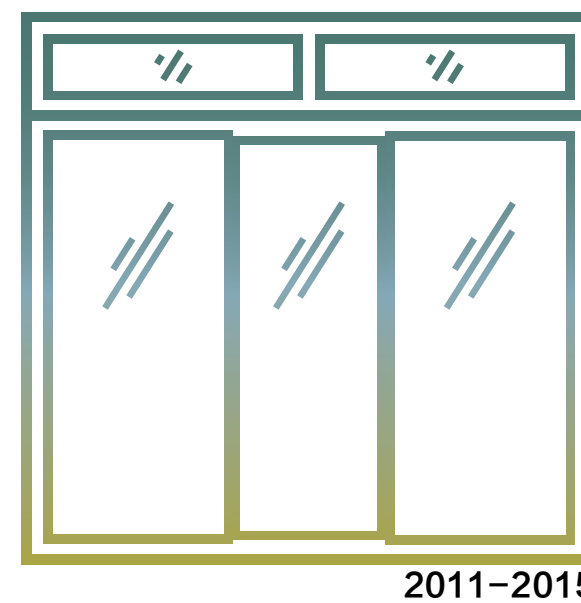
箭厂空间四年书



2011-2015

ARROW FACTORY: THE NEXT FOUR YEARS





ARROW FACTORY: THE NEXT FOUR YEARS



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# 什么是好机构？

何颖雅

## 什么是“好机构”？

当然，这是个相当唐突的，让人几乎无法回答的问题。但我们确实一直以来，将来也会通过不同的参考标准来回应“机构性的实践”（instituent practices）中的这一问题——机构性的实践源于“机构批判”（institutional critique），并且将其提出的问题进一步推进和展开，读者们可以留意到我们已经通过设计来回答了这一问题。这本出版物回顾了一个机构在过去四年内的工作，将箭厂空间作为一个默认回复，不管这是一种微弱的关联，还是——我们希望随着阅读的展开可以呈现——在中国当代艺术生产语境下对这个问题的批判性思考和探索。

本文是以我作为《箭厂空间四年书》（2011-2015）这本出版物的特邀编辑和设计师的主观视角来写作，但在此我们应该先承认主体性是具备多种面向的，也就是说，我同时也是一位艺术工作者、空间组织者和写作者。花时间谈一下我自己就是为了说明这种多面向性，它既是构成我们可以尝试去回答“什么是'好机构'”情境的一个原因，又是对其平行的回应。多重的主体身份也是我之所以特别受邀撰写这篇文章的起因，因为它让我和箭厂组织者的工作保有紧密的关联性，不过就像我们经常在书籍封底看到的那些评论一样，我同时也是站在一个观察者／评论者的角度在观看（带着一种明显的共谋）。我第一次登录箭厂的网站是在2008年，网站“关于”的页面上放了一些引述，其中最上面的一条十分抢眼，“这个空间很大。”郑道炼如此说道，他当时是纽约MoMA的联合策展人，现在则是香港M+的总策展人。而箭厂的实际空间只有区区15平米，所以我们可以把这个被特别加以强调的评论看作对一般公共宣传策略中讽刺性的幽默应用，但正如“大”和“好”这类修辞在任何类似语境中的使用一样，这样一种“名不副实”的说法却将箭厂带入了另一个“大”的艺术相关性领域，而这个领域也恰恰处于我们在此提到的机构批判的话语范畴内。

## “好机构”：一种历史眼光

对于在艺术界工作的很多人来说，我们所理解的机构批判的历史可以追溯到60年代，当时包括迈克尔·亚瑟（Michael Asher）、罗伯特·史密斯森（Robert Smithson）、丹尼尔·布伦（Daniel Buren）、汉斯·哈克（Hans Haacke）和马塞尔·布达埃尔（Marcel Broodthaers）在内的很多艺术家开始广泛地质疑美术馆和体制构架的条件。艺术不再被视作纯粹是艺术家和观看者之间的对话，而是从其内在就受到艺术生产系统的塑造。随后在1980和1990年代，蕾妮·格林（Renee Green）、克里斯蒂安·菲利普·穆勒（Christian Philipp Müller）、弗雷德·威尔逊（Fred Wilson）和安德莉亚·弗雷泽（Andrea Fraser）等艺术家则代表了现在被称作“机构批判第二次浪潮”的实践，他们开始意识到主体性的不同存在形式，从而将结构性条件（structural conditions）进一步复杂化。机构不再仅仅代表基于民族国家概念的公共领域，而是成为了碎片化的主体性表现领域的生产者。

当我们回到北京这个15平米的空间，看到诸如梁玥、阿掉队、速溶胡同这些名字时，这个简短的历史回顾也许显得非常不相关，但如果我们转入关于机构可能性的另一个完全不同的思考维度，这种“不相关”也许恰恰是最为关键的。的确，就艺术史线索而言，中国当代艺术的艺术家们缺少的经验正是与决定他们如何被艺术空间表现的情境之间进行对话。正如很多艺术史学家总结的那样，“当代艺术”直到1978年改革开放后才进入中国大陆，在这种情况下，艺术回应的领域可能较少与机构有关（当时没有任何机构对这类艺术家开放<sup>1</sup>），而是和西方媒介及思想的涌入对中国社会政治体制的冲击更加相关。如今中国当代艺术已经走过三十年，但令人失望的是，中国的理论话语仍然执着于对身份的确认，这也许可以被解释为一种重新定义的需要——重新定义机构参与和资本主义制度下破碎的主体性之间的

联系。正像栗宪庭颇具讽刺意味的描述：“我们可以一直用一种积极主动的方式来扮演春卷的角色，并且在一定程度上渐渐改变馅儿的内容，于此同时也不放弃非常实际地思考我们自身当代文化中的问题”。<sup>2</sup> 他的策略与后殖民理论中的一些观点一致，属于一种机构批判的实践性操作，旨在建立起一种艺术生产和表现的另类框架，其目标是重新塑造意义和价值的生产机制中多方权力的互动关系，而这恰恰可以把我们带回北京这个不起眼的小空间内的“机构性实践”。

## “好机构”：有意义的和有价值的

所以我们把箭厂与“好机构”这个说法并置究竟是想说明什么呢？其实这并不是单纯的一对一的关系。如同这本出版物的设计布局，其中展示的是一系列思考意义和价值的角度，这不仅仅是受机构批判的历史的影响，更是受到回头去追问机构自身更为根本性问题的欲望驱使。从这种意义上来说，“机构化”并不意味着常规理解中规则的确立，或者对既定目标的坚定追求，再或者是其体制化程度（箭厂几乎完全回避了这些特征），如果我们把机构视作用以稳定社会行为的共享系统——这也是它更本质的特征——去重新思考，那么《箭厂空间四年书》就是这样一个过程。

回到机构最本初的意思上，哲学家和符号学家保罗·维尔诺（Paolo Virno）将语言和仪式定义为界定人类之矛盾存在的两大人类学机制（anthropological institution）。<sup>3</sup> 其实这些系统所做的就是建立意义和价值的规则，其表现则是行为的编码和观念的形成。这种过程的单个案例可以体现为艺术家的创作，如果我们认真观察这本书中的每个项目，我们会发现它们中都存在一个独特的艺术主体，与之相对应

的是一个独特的意义和价值的生产系统，一种独特的与这个世界相处的方式（或者背离这个世界的方式）。同样地，如果我们从箭厂的规模、实用性和在地性来看，我们就可以理解关于意义和价值的另外一套坐标系。它的工作既是一种特定的时间和空间情境／现象的结果也是其制造者：北京老城区里的城中村；中产和士绅化；中国当代艺术界；小型的艺术家自营空间。这些不同参照系间的交织方式——在这个过程中箭厂的组织者们通过对抗、处理，甚至参与其中而形成了小型的回应结构——也是一种探讨意义和价值其他可能性的方式，尽管它承认自身的边缘地位。<sup>4</sup> 意义在艺术作品中体现为比喻或者象征，一种观点的表述。价值则指向随着社会政治可能性不同形态的出现而对意义作出的重新组合。这两点都可以嵌入箭厂的特殊语境，它本身就是一个生产意义和价值的系统或者说平台，这也恰恰是维尔诺意义上的机构的功能。于是我们也可以去重新思考机构的概念，把意义和价值的新形式与“小”（15平米）、“低成本”（自主经营、部分自费，没有持续的外部支持）和相对的“不起眼”（展览通常不设公共开幕）联系起来。

箭厂确实具备一种“类机构”（quasi-institutional）的特征，不仅是因为它的规模，也在于它与艺术领域内各种权力模式之间的不确定关系——举例而言，基金会、知名的艺术家和评论家（同时也处于前文提到的西方主导的“当代艺术”的各种系统的包裹之下）。但和更加“正规”的机构不同，这些关系并不是固定的，而像是一系列毫无预谋的“遭遇”（或者拒绝），这和 Gerald Raunig 以及 Gene Ray 所描述的作为机构批判第三次浪潮操作方法的“机构性事件的连锁关系”（concatenation of instituent events）相距不远。<sup>5</sup> 这本书是箭厂展览的第二本出版物，也标志着箭厂在向它的实践的第八个年头迈进，但现在仍然不存在可以保证其持续发展的既定机制、惯例和方向的设想。但箭厂工作中对一些方法（布展，与艺术家合作，以及寻找赞助等）和关系（与邻居和房东的关系，以及组织者之间的关系等）的积累和持续的修正含有一定程度的灵

活性和自发性，这是大型机构无法做到的。这本出版物中呈现的各种展览通过反映空间在过去几年内的工作方向和组织方式，从而印证了箭厂的调整和发展，而这些过程、协商和平衡行为必须作为小型机构多面性的组成部分加以强调——艺术家变成策展人、销售者和建筑工人，反之亦然。<sup>6</sup> 从某种角度来看，我们可以将这种模式和前文提到的碎片化的主体性一并视作我们作为文化工作者所携带的不稳定性，与此同时，我们也可以看到一种“策略”，在其中，等级制度被打破，不同的角色得以分享和交换，而这些活动又形成了对这种策略的新的、积极的表述。情境与回应之间的协商——在这里是穿过一扇白色的店铺窗户的边界——构成了机构化的一个例子，它不那么和稳定的行为相关，而是一种持续的、动态的实践。

### “好机构”：作为设计

作为本书的设计师，我希望读者们可以找到与更加线性的阅读平行的一种阅读挑战。《箭厂空间三年书》（2008-2011）中“场地”、“场景”、“场域”的分类组织方式仍然可以作为观察此后这些项目的透镜，而引入一种更广泛的意义和价值谱系可以有助于理解箭厂作为机构性实践的属性。在和箭厂的组织者讨论中，我们决定在这个网络中引入三个松散的分类：从意义（抽象／幻想／记忆）→（历史／社会／现实）→（关系／交换）到价值。我们有意回避给每个项目贴标签的做法，相反，我们鼓励一种对于两种并不互相排斥的话语的多视角阅读。这些想法当然还是更清晰地体现在“做”中（或者翻看、重新审订等等）。无论如何，这是一个设计，一个思想的作品或是空间。无论是否构成第三次浪潮，我们作为艺术家、设计师或空间组织者，身份是滑动不安的。在北京这个脏乱差且高度污染的城市中（我们并不仅仅是指空气质量）站稳脚跟并不是个“小”本事。或许，这甚至可以说这是件举足轻重的“大”事。

<sup>1</sup> “就像1990年代的很多艺术批评家和艺术史学家一样，朱青生、王林和王南溟都十分关注中国当代艺术生产和展示空间的匮乏。中国当代艺术只能在海外展出的情况给很多观众留下一一种“流亡艺术”的印象。”——邵亦杨，“中国艺术的国际身份：1990年代中国当代艺术的理论辩论”，《Contemporary Chinese Art and Film: Theory Applied and Resisted》，编辑：郭继生，华盛顿特区 New Academia 出版社，2013

<sup>2</sup> 栗宪庭，“中国艺术：国际艺术大餐中的一道道春卷——西方消费文化对中国特色社会主义体制的冲击”，《艺术家》杂志，1998年第一期第二卷

<sup>3</sup> 保罗·维尔诺，“人类学和机制理论”，《艺术和当代批判性实践：重塑机构批判》，编辑：Gerald Raunig 和 Gene Ray，伦敦 MayflyBooks 出版社，2009，第95-112页

<sup>4</sup> 对既存系统的抵抗和参与之间的冲突被艺术家 Marcelo Expósito 描述为“与后福特时代劳动力在自我确认与控制（服从）间的摇摆并无二致，它时常自相矛盾，因为它同时处在自治和服从两种情况里。”与其陷入这种矛盾并且无所作为地期待来自权力的补偿，他坚信“艺术、文化和教育机制中的批判性劳动力的潜能——不仅是要启蒙人群，更首先是要去影响知识生产和主体化进程的既定模式。”

<sup>5</sup> 《艺术和当代批判性实践：重塑机构批判》，编辑：Gerald Raunig 和 Gene Ray，伦敦 MayflyBooks 出版社，2009

<sup>6</sup> 所以其实我们可以看到，小型空间的“组织者”不仅在从事“观念性基础工作”，同时还必须承担各种琐碎的“基层工作”，不过在体现这种多面性的诸多例子中最出人意料的是李岳阳的展览“度”（2014）——李岳阳曾有过一段牢狱生涯，现在以放高利贷为生，在箭厂展出的“度”是他作为艺术家的首个展览。

何穎雅是一位时基艺术、都市实践及设计工作者，作品多藉由多维度的艺术词汇探索微观政治、主体性和基于亲密关系之网结生产的 能代性。她也是北京独立艺术空间“家作坊”（2008-2013年）的创办人。何穎雅平日好饮鸳鸯茶。

# WHAT IS A "GOOD INSTITUTION"? ELAINE W. HO

This is a rather bold rhetorical question, of course. While we continue to delve into various responses to the question of the “instituent practices,” which stem from and push beyond the issues raised by institutional critique, the reader will notice we have already answered the question as a matter of design. This publication, as a review of the last four years of one institution’s work, places Arrow Factory as the default answer, whether as a mere point of association, or—as we hope the following pages will reveal—as a critical reflection and exploration of ways to answer that question in the context of Chinese contemporary art production.

This text is written from the subjective positioning of my role as contributing editor and designer of this publication, *Arrow Factory: The Next Four Years*, but herein we should already be honest about the multiplicity of subjectivity, and that is to say, I am also an artist, space organizer and writer. The point of taking the time to talk about myself here is to exemplify such multifacetedness as part of both the cause and parallel response to conditions by which we try to answer the question, “What is a good institution?” The result of inhabiting these layered subjective positions is the reason why I have been additionally invited to write this essay in the first place, as it places me in relatively close proximity to the work of Arrow Factory’s organizers, yet like a blurb splayed on the back of a book cover, perhaps as one who looks on (with expressed complicity) from an observer/commentator’s position. The first time I visited Arrow Factory’s website in 2008, a few such quotes garnished the “About” page, with one in particular standing out bluntly at the top. “It’s huge,” claimed Doryun Chong, then Associate Curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, currently chief curator at M+ Hong Kong. Knowing the actual size of Arrow Factory’s wee 15 m<sup>2</sup> space, we can take this highlighted statement as a humorous use of irony in public relations, but just as the rhetoric of words like “huge” or “big” or “good”

in any such context, the drama of association brings Arrow Factory into another realm of “grand” artistic relevance, and that is precisely part of the discourse of institutional critique that is being addressed here.

## The “Good Institution”: Historically Speaking

The kind of institutional critique many of us working in the art world have come to understand has a genealogy tracing back to the 1960s, when artists such as Michael Asher, Robert Smithson, Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke and Marcel Broodthaers broadly began to question the conditions of the museum and institutional frameworks. Art was no longer viewed as a pure dialogue between artist and viewer, but inherently shaped by the systems in which art is produced. Later in the late 1980s and 90s, artists such as Renee Green, Christian Philipp Müller, Fred Wilson and Andrea Fraser began to typify what could be analyzed as the second wave of institutional critique, which further complicated structural conditions with an awareness of varying forms of subjectivity. The institutions were no longer simply representatives of a public sphere founded upon ideas of the nation-state, but the producers of splintered realms of subjective representation.

This minor art historical review may seem irrelevant if we jump back to a 15 m<sup>2</sup> space in Beijing and see names like Liang Yue, A Diao Dui and Instant Hutong, but such “irrelevancy” is perhaps crucial if we are to veer into a whole other vector of thought regarding the possibilities of institutions. Indeed, what contemporary artists in China failed to experience in terms of an art historical trajectory was the very making of a dialogue with the conditions in which they were represented by art spaces. As many historians generalize, “contemporary art” did not come to the Mainland until after Reform and Opening Up beginning in 1978, and as such, the

realm of artistic response may have less to do with institutions (there were none accessible to artists<sup>1</sup>), but more with the influx of Western media and ideas on the Chinese sociopolitical stronghold. Now more than three decades into the contemporary, a rather disappointing obsession with identity affirmations in current Chinese theoretical discourse continues; the links between institutional participation and the fractured subjectivities under capitalism still need redefining. As art historian Li Xianting ironically describes, “We can always play the Spring Roll in a pro-active way and to a certain degree alter the content of the Spring Roll over time, while all the time realistically reckoning with issues of our own contemporary culture.”<sup>2</sup> His strategy, parallel to the ideas being shared by postcolonial theory, is an in-practice manifestation of institutional critique, aimed at establishing an alternative framework for the production and presentation of art. Its aim is to reconfigure the dynamics of power within the institution of meaning and value, and this is the “instituent practice” that brings us back to a wee, little space in Beijing.

## The “Good Institution”: Meaningful and Valuable

So what exactly are we proposing with this juxtaposition of Arrow Factory and the rhetorical “good institution”? In fact it is not such a clean one-to-one relationship. Like the layout of this publication, what is being presented here is a spectrum of positions in the consideration of meaning and value, not only influenced by a history of institutional critique, but also by a desire to look back towards a more fundamental question of the institution itself. Institutionalization, in this sense, does not refer to the oft connoted formalizing of rules, resolute objective seeking or the scales of bureaucracy (traits which Arrow Factory deviates from almost entirely), but if we rethink the



institution in terms of its more intrinsic quality as a shared system of stabilizing social behaviors, then *The Next Four Years* is just such a process.

Returning to that originary sense of the institution, philosopher and semiologist Paolo Virno identifies language and ritual as the two most critical anthropological institutions to frame our ambivalent existences as human beings.<sup>3</sup> What these systems do, in fact, is establish an order of meaning and value, expressed through the codification of behavior and framing of concepts. This process as singularity can be manifested via the work of the artist, and if we are to examine each of the projects in this volume, we may find for each a particular artistic subjectivity in accordance with a particular system of meaning and value, a particular sense of being in (and detached from) the world. In the same sense, if we follow the sense of scale, practicality and site-specificity by which Arrow Factory operates, we begin to understand another set of coordinates pertaining to meaning and value. Its contribution is both consequence and initiator of certain temporal and spatial conditions/phenomena: village-in-city scenarios of Beijing's old urban center; gentrification; the Chinese contemporary art world; and small-scale independent artist initiatives. The way these parameters intersect, and the small structures of response that Arrow Factory's organizers set up to counter, deal with and even participate in, is also a manner of negotiating alter-possibilities of meaning and value despite an acknowledgement of a marginal position.<sup>4</sup> Meaning, is exemplified here in the artwork as metaphor and symbol, a statement of an idea. Value refers to the reconfiguration of meaning along alter-scales of sociopolitical possibility. Both of these are conditioned by the context of Arrow Factory, itself a system or platform that establishes meaning and value, the precise function of the institution in Virno's sense. We are thus able to reconsider the concept of institutions in the first place, to accord new forms

of meaning and value to even the "small" (15 m<sup>2</sup>), "low-budget" (volunteer-run, partially self-funded, without consistent external funding sources) and relatively "unspectacular" (public openings are not hosted for any of the exhibitions).

It is indeed a certain "quasi-institutional" quality that Arrow Factory has been able to embrace, not only in terms of scale, but in terms of its oscillating relations to modes of power in the field—namely, funding bodies, established artists and critics (of course also enveloped by those aforementioned systems of "contemporary art" dominated by the Global North). Unlike more official institutions, however, these relations are not fixed, and occur as an unprogrammed series of encounters (or refusals), not so distant from the "concatenation of instituent events" described by Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray as the *modus operandi* for the emergent third wave of institutional critique.<sup>5</sup> This being the second publication of Arrow Factory's exhibitions and marking the move into the eighth year of practice, there is still no assumption that certain mechanisms, routines or decisions have been put into place to allow for continued progress. These include the accumulation and ongoing refinement of certain techniques (for putting on shows, collaborating with artists, appropriating funding, *etc.*) and relationships (with the neighbors and the landlord, or among co-organizers, *etc.*), but they also include in this case a certain degree of flexibility and spontaneity that many larger scale institutions cannot afford. The variety of work presented in this publication attests to certain tweaks and developments in the way that the space has been directed and organized over the years. These are processes, negotiations and balancing acts that must be emphasized as part of the multifacetedness of the small-scale institution, where artists become curators, sellers and construction workers, and vice versa.<sup>6</sup> From one angle, we can acknowledge this hand-in-hand with the previously mentioned splintering of subjectivity

as part of our precarity as cultural workers, but we can also recognize a play where hierarchies are able to be dismantled, and roles shared and interchanged in ways that are also positive new iterations of it. The negotiations between condition and response are—here across the bounds of a white storefront window frame—an example of institutionalizing that is less to do with stable behaviour, but more by way of an ongoing, dynamic practice.

## The "Good Institution": By Design

It is my hope as designer that the reader can find a challenging underscore to parallel the more straightforward reading. While the organizational categories of site, situation and sphere used in *Arrow Factory: 3 Years* could still be applied as a lens to view the projects hereafter, instead we are implementing a more general spectrum of meaning

and value that seeks to understand Arrow Factory as an instituent practice. Worked out through discussions with Arrow Factory's organizers, three loose categories have given form to this matrix: from *meaning* (abstraction/fantasy/memory) → (history/society/reality) → (relation/exchange) to *value*. However, we have deliberately chosen not to overpower each project with labels, and instead encourage a multi-positioned reading of a mutually non-exclusive discourse. There is a nebula of thought that still always explains itself better through doing (or flipping through, reexamining, *etc.*). In any case, it is a design, a work or a space for thought. We are on slippery footing, as artists, designers or space organizers, third wave or not. And maintaining a foothold amidst that grimy, polluted Beijing landscape is no small feat (*we are not only talking about the air quality here*). Perhaps it is even "huge."

<sup>1</sup> "Like most art critics and historians within China during the 1990s, Zhu Qingsheng, Wang Lin and Wang Nanming were concerned about the lack of contemporary art venues to produce and exhibit art within China. The fact that Chinese contemporary art could only be exhibited abroad gave audiences the impression of an 'art in exile.'" SHAO Yiyang, "The International Identity of Chinese Art: Theoretical Debates on Chinese Contemporary Art in the 1990s", in *Contemporary Chinese Art and Film, Theory Applied and Resisted*, ed. Jason C. KUO (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Li Xianting, "Chinese Art: Egg Roll at an International Banquet?—The Impact of Western Consumer Culture on a Chinese Socialist Stronghold", *Yishujia*, Vol. 2, No.1, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Paolo VIRNO, "Anthropology and Theory of Institutions", in *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, ed. Gerald RAUNIG and Gene RAY (London: MayflyBooks, 2009) 95-112.

<sup>4</sup> The obvious conflict between resistance to and participation with existing structures is described by artist Marcelo Expósito as "no different to the way which post-Fordist labor in general oscillates between self-valorization and control (subjugation), and it's often paradoxical because it operates under the conditions of autonomy and subjection simultaneously." Rather than become mired in such ambivalence or lie fallow while waiting for hegemonic recuperation, however, he remains steadfast to "the potential of critical labor within art, cultural and educational institutions—not only to enlighten some minds but, above all, to influence the established modes of the production of knowledge and subjectivation."

<sup>5</sup> Gerald RAUNIG and Gene RAY, ed. *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique* (London: MayflyBooks, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> It is no surprise that in the case of small-scale institutions we observe "organizers" doing both the "conceptual groundwork" as well as the "grunt work," but one of the perhaps more unexpected highlights of such multifacetedness can also be seen in the exhibition of Li Yueyang, a loan shark and ex-convict, whose artistic identity premiered at Arrow factory with *Time Spent* (2014).

*Elaine W. HO* (HK/USA) works between the realms of time-based art, urban practice and design, using multiple vocabularies to explore the micropolitics, subjectivities and the alter-possibilities of an intimate, networked production. She is the founder of artist-run project space HomeShop (2008-2013) and since 2005 has been a frequent contributor to a disjunctured stream of thought known as [www.iwishicoulddescribeittoyoubetter.net](http://www.iwishicoulddescribeittoyoubetter.net).



