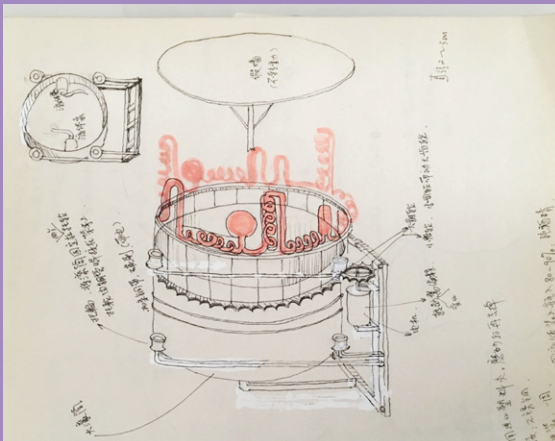


## LIN TIANMIAO: DON'T PUT OUT THE FLAMES IN YOUR HEART

Before meeting Lin Tianmiao, I was able to know this well-established artist only through her artworks and media coverage. One of her previous works, “Protruding Patterns”, was made of carpets that covered the whole room where positive or negative words about women were “protruding”. Even if the audience had no idea what contemporary art is, they could fully feel the artist’s input and emotions. Such continuous enthusiasm and passion has also been seen in her cooperative work with SHMOG for the 2017 “Annealing” project.

It’s been a brand new challenge and attempt for her to create works with glass, which is completely unnecessary for an artist who has been at the peak of her career. With her qualifications, quality of work and reputation, she could have just follow her routine mode, but she chose to make a difference and discover a new creation path. “I happened to want to get rid of some of the previous creation and thinking modes. I want to change my intention and methods in art creation with this opportunity to work with Shanghai Museum of Glass.” Lin Tianmiao owns a studio and a huge creative team. In her previous works, the artist provided concepts and ideas, and the creative team carried out the implementation. Lin Tianmiao admitted that she had been doing this way for 20 years, and that she wanted to break out of this pattern and force herself through such a bottleneck.

In addition to such a strong motive for change, Lin Tianmiao herself is a dedicated learner. “I want to know what glass really is.” Behind these simple words are the time and efforts the artist has devoted: from February 9, 2017 when she arrived in Shanghai, she has traveled through Baoshan, Qingpu and Chongming, commuted among manufacturers and studios, and talked to technical engineers and glassblowers about mysteries of glass. “I did not expect that glass is this highly plastic. It has the capacity for very radical approaches: it could be made very strong or very fragile, or it could be made very beautiful or very ugly.” In the two months of her glass observation tour, Lin



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Tianmiao was never tired of talking about her own project with and glass professionals; from the concept to vision, she always elaborated her ideas from the beginning to the end each and every time, as though she was never bored of doing so. The artist has also been exploring the limits of glass, “What’s the limit for glass to be bent? What colors can I put? What are the largest or smallest size for glass blowing? And what might the duration be? Some artists may think they do not have to go to the factory or understand this material, and they can only offer the renderings and leave the rest of work to the factory. But this is not the case for me. I have to know everything about this material.”

After understanding the characteristics of the material, the next step was to understand the concepts. The essential idea of the “Annealing” project is to invite contemporary artists to integrate their ideas into glass. For Lin Tianmiao, after carefully observing each exhibit at SHMOG, she was thinking about how to combine glass and ideas. “Glass is a very magical material that it absorbs artist into it,” Talking about whether the collision of glass and contemporary art could bring discomfort, Lin Tianmiao said, “The boundaries are blurred. Going a little further, we may be dealing with only craftsmanship, or with mere concepts, or some conventional ideas like large sculptures or monuments. Such boundaries are actually clearly defined, but may be implemented with not-so-strict principles. I don’t think it’s necessary to focus on the definitions of crafts, art and concepts.” With such a long time to observe glass, Lin Tianmiao is now able master this material, “When boundaries are blurred and not so distinctive, I think I have a wider and more open space. This is actually a good thing, and I don’t need to be stuck in here.”

Under the cooperation with SHMOG, Lin Tianmiao is expected to complete three pieces of works together with the museum. The works, in her view, will be groundbreaking, which will be unprecedented exhibits for SHMOG and total new challenges for herself. Although at that time no one would know what the outcome would be, the artist has inspired and motivated the people around with great confidence and devotion. Some say artists have completely different attitudes towards the manuscripts. That’s like when people compare storyboards from different directors, and the stark difference in those from Jiang Wen and Tsui Hark was hilarious, as the delicacy or roughness in storyboards represent the different characters and ways of creation of the artists. Whenever Lin

**LIN TIANMIAO**

Tianmiao took out her dictionary-like manuscript, she struck and even overwhelmed surrounding people: it was so thick! Each page is full of words, figures, and marks with different colors that represent her concerns of different aspects of the works. Whether it is a perspective, profile, or floor plan, each page is the accurate calculation of Ms. Lin like engineering drawings, and the changes in each manuscript shows the ideas of the artist, "You can see from my manuscripts that things are related to the structure of the human body, and are extended to reflect the spirit of the contemporary time. As I slowly move forward, I explore a variety of possibilities. Finally I found what can make the works alive and vital: one is the mechanical rotation, and the other the flow of liquid. In this sense, glass becomes a carrier of thought, so I do not have to be stuck in the boundaries between glassmaking techniques and idea expression." Perhaps for some artists, the manuscripts may be only an expression of the completeness and they materialize the manuscripts; but for Lin Tianmiao, the meaning of the manuscripts is far more than that: her manuscripts reflect the process of her thinking and creation, "From the scripts, you can see how my ideas originated, how I met bottlenecks, where I needed to explore, and the gap between what I expected and what can actually be done."

As she improved the manuscripts, the plan also became clearer. The concept of the three groundbreaking works came into shape during her multiple travels between Beijing and Shanghai. The sketches finally became detailed drawings, and the names of her works were also determined: "connection", "warm currents" and "response".

Among the three pieces of works, one large outdoor installation is something that has never been tried before at SHMOG, which is the "connection". For this "tricky" outdoor works, Lin Tianmao made dozens of modifications. What was changed was not only the plan, but rather the idea behind it. Outdoor installations are large, political and preaching public sculptures that carry a sense of direction. "I do not like being preaching or political, because it makes people feel restrained. Politics has played a too greater role in guiding or infringing our lives, so I want to make something that is more related to our body and our consciousness." This outdoor installation is, to some extent, an "unfinished" piece of work, and the artist hopes the audience can integrate their own sense and education background into the work when observing it, "I am not teaching or telling you what to learn. I want each of the audience to generate a public awareness which is not political but universal; an awareness that people in any part of the society can resonate with.

In contrast, "warm currents" and "response" are completely different in visual experience and expression. "warm currents" is about our daily experience and subconscious lifestyles; the artist hopes to transform from the collective orientation of the first piece of work to a mass awareness, or a small-scale exchange. "warm currents" features a lot of modified glass experiment equipment, "Viewer must think that we live in a chemical environment, a chemical state, or a state under control," There are two dynamic manifestations in the work. First, the fluorescent stimulating liquid rotates in the glass instruments that are connected with each other. Second, the external mechanical

structure drives the instruments to revolve. “In the process of rotation and revolution, the installation is not able to remain balance, and such a contradiction is interesting.” As for the third piece of work, “response”, the artist looks to explore the one-on-one response between “I” and the machine. This reaction is visualized and exists beyond in the concept, “Viewers must see the image of I’ in this work, and the image of such ‘I’ is also seen by the machine.” Lin Tianmiao hopes to help people understand the vulnerability of one-on-one relationships and the risks in this increasingly singular and individualized world. “Though all made of glass and liquid, the status of the three works must be different, but they must constitute a consistent system.”

In these three pieces of indivisible and yet independent works, automotive “mechanical” control and movement play an extremely important role. I also asked the artist about the relationship between the works and the “mechanical”, and even artificial intelligence out of curiosity, “In fact, we are dealing with artificial intelligence every day, and the difference lies in how deeply we are involved. For example, we use smart phones have changed greatly our way of life and communication,” and Lin Tianmiao said sincerely, “In fact, I found it quite difficult to go in this area, but through research, we can see more possibilities. Through technological advances, we artists can participate in contemporary society more deeply, and our topics are broader and more abstract. But such abstraction is not beyond the real world or the society. The foundation of art is still humane and personal.” Ultimately, all the material external expressions, precise mechanical operations and glass are attributed to people, “Going back to ourselves to look into our heart is a particularly important direction.”

People are not only the artist’s focus, but also the most vibrant about “Annealing”. At this moment, what is flowing is not only the liquid in works, but also exchanges and emotions between the artist and the museum. Lin Tianmiao has been very willing to communicate with various staff of the museum, especially with Executive President Zhang Lin. “Every time we talk, we start by the structures of galleries and museums in Shanghai. We learn from and understand each other. We keep analyzing what the museum’s collection system should be, how the cultural structure in Shanghai, and what the museum should do through the ‘Annealing’ project.” In such exchanges, SHMOG, as a newcomer to contemporary art, gained huge benefits. During the cooperation between the artist and the museum, it’s not only about Lin Tianmiao completing these three pieces of works, but also about going deeper from the works to cultural possibilities, from the micro to the macro, and from small things to bigger things. It helps the artist correct her own working methods and opens more possibilities for the museum. These are exactly the eternal and precious spiritual heritage the “Annealing” project will leave.

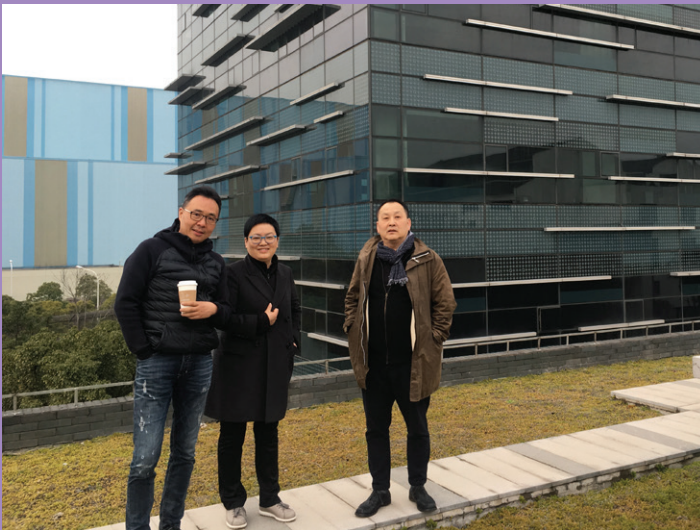
“I hope in the future, this project has its own particularity,” Lin Tianmiao has expressed great expectation for the “Annealing” project,” This particularity lies in the fact that only this institution can complete such a task with this material. It is not simply about inviting artists and make artworks; it is about every artist does their best to present their ideas in a particular environment with a specific material, and the works should be unique and

only possible in this place.” For SHMOG, we are exploring the future of glass art, and even the future of human society, and we are building a unique collection system. The collection of “Annealed” project works are not the same as ordinary collection. Today, China is entering into an era when museums and galleries are springing up. Whichever theme they choose, these museums or galleries should still offer interpretation around a historical clue or artists. “We get the glass, and we can create history. Both the museum and I need such ideas and ambition.”

As of the completion of this article, Lin Tianmiao’s works are still in full swing of production, and the story of the 2017 “Annealing” still goes on. We can not be too optimistic that we won’t encounter difficulties or setbacks in the future, but as Lin Tianmiao said, “I’m never too depressed to work, and I never give up.”

“I never put out the flames in my heart.”

TEXT: CATHYE YANG, CESARE YE



President of SHMOG  
Zhang Lin with Lin Tian-  
Mao and Wang GongXin