
On Yiqiang Wu's Individualism in His Performance Art

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This study focuses on the contemporary Chinese artist Yiqiang Wu's performance art in the 2000s. During the past several decades, Yiqiang Wu has used his physical body to express his views of "individualism", which stresses the importance of individual freedom over the conformity of societal groups. Starting from the metaphorical ceremonies in "Drops of Light" (1999), "Bathing in the Field of Canola Flowers" (2000), and "A Funeral at the End of the 20th Century" (1999), Yiqiang Wu refuses to live the illusive life of "quiet desperation," as Henry David Thoreau writes in his classic *Walden*. On the other hand, he constructs his subjective truth by connecting himself with nature and historical sites. In his "Perching" (2007), "Bridges" (2003-2007), "Through" (2007), and "Moments" (2004-2007), sometimes even at a great risk, he demonstrates a serene and dignified beauty as well as spiritual transcendence. Furthermore, in terms of "individualism", Yiqiang Wu also demonstrates the concept of spiritual awakening by metaphorically stepping through the darkness into the world of light (e.g. "The Cold Winter" (2009-2010), "The Dark Box: the Express Delivery without a Favorable Wind" (2017) and "Out of the Darkness" (2018)). In the process, justice, courage, and freedom can also be found in these works. Taken together, by analyzing Yiqiang Wu's performance art, the study attempts to explore the complexity of his "individualism".

Keywords: individualism; a physical body; performance art