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Artist HuiMeng Wang truly knows “Art of Throwing the Perfect Chocolate Fountain Party”



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HuiMeng Wang

Growing up in Inner Mongolia of China, HuiMeng Wang was fascinated by literature and art. At the time, this meant she wanted to be a window display designer, a movie costume designer, or a writer when she “grew up.” For most people, those childhood dreams eventually transform into something much different, but for Wang, her passion just grew stronger as she aged, and there was one way for her to truly cultivate it: as an artist.

“I just realized not long ago that what I am doing right now is somehow all of these things I wanted to do as a child. I build installations and design my own set, control the costumes of the performers, and create the narratives. I’m surprised how it worked out this way,” said Wang.

Now, while living her dream, she is internationally recognized for her talent. While working around the world, Wang has gained fans while embarking on different projects. Focusing on the mediums of photography, installation, performance, and video, she has earned the reputation of one of China’s best visual artists. Her work on *The Isolation Book*, *Fire Green as Grass*, *The Pure Reason We Dine Tonight*, and *You are Beautiful You Should be Seen*, as well as her many individual exhibitions have garnished a lot of praise from the media and critics.

“I come from a generation of people that have witnessed modern China’s urbanization, the largest migration in human history, unfolding in front of them. I grew up in a cultural context where modernization has been, in effect, Westernization. And thus, my work is often a dramatized presentation of individual and collective anxieties in the process of establishing a new, and rather Westernized, identity,” Wang described.

Using installation, video and live performance, Wang transforms the exhibition space into a temporary theatre, exploring the disconnection between a fantasized, performed “reality” based on Western narratives, and the actual reality she lives in. This is exactly what she did on *A Beginner’s Guide to the Art of Throwing the Perfect Chocolate Fountain Party*, a project that although it was extremely challenging and demanding, resulted in being the highlight of her esteemed career.

“This was definitely the most challenging project that I’ve done so far. Such a large crowd was watching. It was very loud and very chaotic. The actors and the director of photography were under a lot of pressure, and I was too. I needed to keep a sense of

authority because I needed to create a finished product within three days, and I wanted it to be outstanding,” said Wang.

Wang achieved her goal, and the end product was outstanding. It was an installation, three-day performance that resulted in a short film. It took place in the Herbst Pavilion, Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture in San Francisco last year. Wang transformed the exhibition space into a film set, and a large audience watched the filming of *A Beginner’s Guide to the Art of Throwing the Perfect Chocolate Fountain Party* as a continuous performance piece.

“I got to cast some really talented people to perform in this piece including one of my best friends. On set I was very focused on the production, but at the same time I noticed people’s reaction as well. I liked the fact that some audiences stayed long enough to develop their own versions of narratives for the story based on what they saw and imagined,” Wang described.



Image from “A Beginner’s Guide to the Art of Throwing the Perfect Chocolate Fountain Party”

The film is a satirical presentation of table etiquette based on a 1945 television commercial. As four people are enjoying a chocolate fountain dinner party, the narrator raises questions on the potential faux-pas of the diners. For example, when the hostess is

cutting an Oreo cookie, the narrator interrogates: should she place her fork tines between the letters “OR” and “EO” on the cookie, or, should she stick the fork directly into the filling? As the party goes on, everyone’s confidence is shaken. On the surface, however, they remain seemingly calm.

“Over the past three decades, the scale of urbanization in China has been without precedent. A new middle class is emerging. This demographic is not-yet-actualized cultural identities are largely shaped by the art, literature and pop culture of the West. And in a cultural sense, modernization in China often equals Westernization. Under such context, this project is a dramatized presentation of individual and collective anxieties in the process of establishing a new identity,” said Wang. “In reference to Pierre Étaix’s *As Long as You’ve Got Your Health* (1966) and Luis Buñuel’s *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972), the piece questions how mass-produced, carefully curated messages intended for consumer audiences are influencing people’s conception of an ideal lifestyle,” said Wang.

Conveying such a complex message was no challenge for Wang, who is extremely experienced and sought-after for doing just that. Ke Peng, one of the actresses in *A Beginner’s Guide to the Art of Throwing the Perfect Chocolate Fountain Party* who played Dorothea in the piece, says Wang’s work is one of a kind.

“HuiMeng is extremely creative and forever able to generate ideas. Her artistic vision, her way of seeing, and her perspective in the work she does, are so refreshing and full of genius and divinity. Equally importantly, she has an enormous sense of drive and ambition, and that’s what makes her stand out amongst her peers. She can always clearly articulate her production goals to the performers and collaborators, with great decisiveness and technological accuracy. Her work is both visually stunning and philosophically deep. It’s been such an honor to have performed in her piece and got to know her as this tremendously talented artist she is,” Peng described.

Despite the success and accolades the project received, Wang enjoys her work simply because it is her passion. She understands the details and nuances of her craft, and that is what makes her so exceptional.

“I think most of the time being an artist brings me more misery than joy. But in rare occasions it brings me ecstasy, and nothing compares to that feeling. No other physical

activities or self-indulgence brings a higher level of sense of fulfillment than realizing you’re creating something you’re proud of,” Wang concluded.

To find out more about the project and see videos and images of the performance, you can visit Wang’s [website](#).

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