The German Reception of China's
Contemporary Art Scene

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Inhalt

Abstract

Cultural export and exchange can be understood as a facilitator of cultural understanding which are shaping the perceptions national identities. Rapid social, economic and political transformation of China has led the country to become a leading force in the production and export of cultural products, with emphasis on its rich traditional heritage. This focus has led the country to lack international visibility of its contemporary culture, compared to other Asian countries. But a cultural movement of Chinese contemporary art, which originated in the end of the 70s became a global phenomenon. Chinese contemporary culture was frequently connected to its political engagement throughout the 80s and 90s but differentiated its work with the new millennium. When looking closer at the media it becomes clear though that this linkage of Chinas politics and Chinas contemporary art scene is still present leading the question answered in this paper, *why the reception of the CCA is still being politicized?* To answer this question a symbolic interactionist and postmodern approach has been adapted to look closer at the media distributed receptions and articles of Chinese contemporary art exhibitions. Furthermore has the adaption of Connolly's identity theory and Halls encoding/decoding theory led to the conclusion that politics are linked to the contemporary art scene in order to ensure a normative and art hegemony.

1.0 Introduction

China has a rich and profound culture which over the last decades has become a strategic asset for the country's political, cultural and economic development.

The opening up policy and the booming global market for mass culture have led to the identification of China's Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) as a high potential strategic sector, which facilitates development and integration of a cross border creative economy (CISAC 2015: 34). It is expected that the added value of the whole country's CCI will reach 5 percent of GDP in the near future, and that the cultural and creative industries will become a strategic industry for future growth for the Chinese economy (Li 2018). The cultural exchange and export programs of China function not just as an economic asset but make the cultural understanding of China and thus its perspective of the world visible to other countries. Cultural exchange is therefore not just an economic asset but also a political and cultural one, leading cultural exchange to become part of multiple bilateral and multilateral relations, through soft power and diplomacy strategies.

But although the cultural production is increasing overall, China has been focusing on the development of its cultural heritage and high cultural production before its development of mass or commercial culture compared to other Asian countries (Tse, Shin & Tsang: 2020). This development choice has led the identity of China to be predominantly bound to its traditional heritage and left China's contemporary cultural production to be largely overlooked abroad (D'Hooghe 2014: 64- 65) (Yung-Wen 2016: 66). China's contemporary culture thus lacks visibility internationally compared to other Asian countries. According to scholars like the soft power theorist Joseph Nye or cultural studies scholar John Fiske this would lead to China lacking an important power source, as intercultural exchange is conveying perspectives of its own culture to others. These perspectives are thus made accessible to individuals by the consumption of cultural goods. Cultural resources are thus the basis through which intercultural understanding is yielded (Funk 2007: 52). Cultural movements therefore function in a constitutive role, where culture according to Culture and Communication scholar Nikos Paperstergiadis becomes a mirror and a participant in constructing political, societal and cultural identities (Paperstergiadis 2001: 83). This makes cultural exchange and the export of cultural goods constitutive of the identity of China and Chinese culture aboard.

These identities are not just constituted through the cultural export by China but also through the predispositions of the audience, consuming these cultural goods. A certain understanding of Chinese culture and China is then negotiated in the meeting between the cultural good and the audience. This interaction then reinforces or changes an already existing understanding of what China and Chinese art is perceived to be. This understanding is the Chinese identity will be bestowed upon Chinese cultural products by the audience and which the cultural products influence.

Identities are, according to symbolic interactionist Richard Jenkins, necessary for the individual as they on the one hand categorize, hence reduce the complexity of everyday life and on the other hand establish a difference between their own identity and other identities (Jenkins 2006:38-39). Identities are thus necessary to become able to navigate in a complex world and to exist as an individual. Identities order the expectations of certain situations, subjects or objects, leading to specific behaviour. The consumption of cultural products then enables the audience to build and revise an understanding of what China and Chinese culture is in their perception.

One of the most prominent and successful Chinese cultural products is its contemporary art movement (CCA). Established in the end of the 70s, the movement quickly became a phenomenal success abroad with its representatives becoming some of the most influential artists in the world and their work worth millions. The first contemporary Chinese art exhibition in Germany took place in 1993. Since then, frequent cultural exchange has been taking place between China and Germany, with Beijing and Berlin as well as Hamburg and Shanghai being partner cities (Baur 2014: 83).

Since then, the development of the CCA has led to a distinct interpretation of what this movement is about. The reception of Chinese contemporary art (CCA) in the west has been characterized as undifferentiated by scholars. Chinese curator, critic and scholar of contemporary Chinese art Gao Minglu, points out that the western reception of CCA is marked by an intense perspectivism which peaked in the 90s. He highlights CCAs predominant characterization as a mediator of political Chinese ideology. Chinese ideology is so intrinsically linked to CCA, that it is viewed as constitutive for CCA. This dominant perception therefore silences other possible areas of interest addressed by the CCA, such as cultural exchange (Minglu 2012).

The Taiwanese Researcher Yao Yung-Wen also notices that CCA in the west is often discussed as a form of resistance to the CCPs authoritarian power (Yung-Wen 2016: 64). Although, she does acknowledge how apolitical CCA nowadays is being politicized as well, since a development into marketization and inclusion into economic development goals has made the Chinese cultural export linked to Chinese state goals, especially when being part of the states' diplomatic efforts (Yung-Wen 2016: 57-58). It therefore seems that politics and art are inseparable when it comes to CCA and are reduced in differentiation to dichotomies of being state critical or state controlled. The research question of this thesis will thus be:

Why is the reception of the CCA in Germany being politicized?

1.2 The Becoming of China's Contemporary Art Scene: A historic overview

Before I explain how the Problem formulation will be answered, do I want to give a historical overview of the art movement in question to help to understand what the topic entails.

The Chinese Contemporary Art (CCA) is an umbrella term referring to a range of movements and styles by Chinese artists, who produced art in the last 40 years.

1979 marks the beginning of the Chinese Contemporary Art movement, with young Chinese artists organizing unofficial exhibitions throughout Beijing. The artists were inspired by modern international art, which had just been introduced to China through the opening up policy of Deng Xiaoping for the first time since the cultural revolution (Baur 2014: 14). These exhibitions depicted political anti-Mao messages and were radically different in style and message from the traditional or social realist Chinese art style. This early form of CCA quickly rose in popularity throughout the 1980s (Minglu 2012) and reached its peak in the contemporary art style called the "85 New Wave", which deconstructed China's relationship to tradition and modernity (Baur 2014: 20). The themes depicted in these exhibitions differentiated severely from the official party standpoint and led to the cancellation of Chinese artists exhibitions and the postponing of western exhibitions by the CCP (Baur 2014: 20). February 1989 thus marked the peak and end of the 85 New Wave movement with Artist Xiao

Lu firing a gun on her own artwork in the now infamous exhibition "China/Avant-Garde" (Baur 2014: 21). Upon this, the CCP initiated censorship of every artwork which was deemed unfit by the ministry of culture (Baur 2014: 21). The New Wave movement officially ended after the Tiananmen Demonstrations in December 1989, when the Party denounced the movement as anti-socialistic (Baur 2014: 21). Artistic freedom seemed impossible for this moment, which led many leading Chinese contemporary artists to leave the country (Baur 2014: 23).

The art of the 1990s thus saw a change in tone in the Chinese contemporary Artists and culminated in two of the most prominent CCA strands to date. The Political Pop (*zhengzhi bopu* 政治波普), which was inspired by the American pop art movement and became known for the mockery and neutralisation of the political reality and the Cynic Realism (*wanshi xianshi zhuyi* 玩世现 实主义), which was a sarcastic Artform that mocks authoritative figures and depicts the artists boredom with his surrounding world (Baur 2014: 24-25).

Political pop and Cynical Realism found unexpected international success, where predominately exiled artists introduced these art forms to a western audience. The critique of China which surrounded these art forms were problematic for the CCP, since they were not in line with the image China wished to resemble, namely as a harmonious and peace-loving nation. This problem was especially severe at this point in time, since China's soft power was at an international low point after the Tiananmen events which left the Chinese government particularly vulnerable regarding its international influence (Yung-Wen 2006: 54-55).

"The problem for the Party was that the Western art world was more in favour of challenging and alternative voices and did not pay the same level of attention to artists who honoured the Party line" (Yung-Wen 2016: 55).

The international success of the Chinese contemporary artists contributed to China's international profile and led to the integration of the CCA into the official Chinese Cultural and Creative Industry. The early 90s were thus marked by the institutionalization of the CCA with the development of a Chinese contemporary art infrastructure, and the commercialization of the contemporary Chinese art world for foreign investors and buyers (Yung-Wen 2016: 55) (Minglu 2012). Auction houses were founded, and artists encouraged to leave their institutional relations and become independent artists (*duli yishujia* 独立艺术家) who produced art that was likely to be sold (Baur 2014: 25). The increasing commercialization was accelerated by the continued success of CCA abroad (Baur 2014: 26). The combination of China's increasing

globalization, the CCPs commercial efforts, and international interest towards CCA led to the eventual proper inclusion of China's Contemporary Art into the world scene (Baur 2014: 35).

The third Shanghai Biennale marked the departure from the art of the 90s into a new millennial. Chinese contemporary art had found new recognition in China, with governmental and market institutionalization to strategically develop the CCA ecology (Minglu 2012). Biennales and Triennale were arranged in a range of Chinese cities, while the Chinese cultural ministry actively sponsored exhibitions abroad. An accelerated production, depoliticization, commercialization and a historic awareness marked the art for the next decade (Baur 2014: 29). These changes redefined the Chinese contemporary art in the new century (Minglu 2012). With many of the exiled artists coming back to China under these redefined conditions, it is still remarkable that 99% of CCA is sold abroad (Baur 2014: 44). The new millennial also saw a generational shift in the art scene. While the older generation of the 80s and 90s also called the Mao-Generation was characterized by coping with the experiences of the cultural revolution era and a clear political agenda, is the new generation of Chinese contemporary artists, also called the post-Mao generation (since they have been born after the death of former Chairman Mao in 1976) shaped by a booming economy, globalization and liberalized education (Seed 2015). The Post-Mao Generation has consequently been characterized for being more concerned with *postmodern themes of individuality* as well as reclaiming Chinese culture in a modern context and reshaping what it means to be Chinese (Seed 2015). This means that although the older generation is still actively working and hugely successful, the young generation of artists has to be differentiated and viewed as a mirror of contemporary China and its relationship to globalization and world aesthetics.

2.0 Research design

The following Chapter presents the research design of this paper. The chapter thus delivers an overview of the methodological considerations made throughout this project. The reader will get an overview of the methods, data and theories used throughout the paper as well as philosophical understandings, limitations of the paper quality criteria and the explanation type of the research design. An argumentation for the choices made is included as well. I will start this subchapter by explaining the chosen research design and answer how the research question will be answered.

2.1 Overview and Research Design

A case study has been chosen as the research design for this paper. This choice has been made based on its ability to contextualize and understand historically specific phenomena, where context and subject are not always easy to differentiate (Lamker 2014: 7). The detailed knowledge produced gives the researcher the ability to look at the particular way in which coherence is built (Flyvbjerg 2015: 502). This makes the analysis of the German reception a fit for a case study, since it to a large degree is about understanding and interpreting the way in which the media is constructing and naturalizing a connection between China's politics and CCA. The answer to why this link is established will be answered through an abductive approach. Part of the answer will be given by the theoretical framework leading to a specific perspective in the analysis. Another part will be given by the exploration of the empirical data to explore how the receptions link CCA and the Chains politics. By answering how this link is established, I hope to become able to answer what some of the consequences and functions for this link are to the CCA arena and production of the German identity.

The research design will thus be overall interpretative, explanatory and holistic making it a natural fit for qualitative methods and analysis strategies (Elman 2009: 121). Situational analysis has therefore been chosen for the method used in the analysis, as it offers a set of concrete methodological tools that helps the researcher understand the different aspects of a situation by deconstructing social phenomena and looking closer at their processual development. This understanding includes not just the main arenas in the situation but the variety of social worlds and their organization through action and discourse as well (Clarke

2005: 178). It is thus a holistic approach, which aims to explore the relations between different perspectives of a situation and include otherwise marginalized actors into consideration.

The focus on the exploration of the relation between different perspectives leads to a postmodern and symbolic interactionist worldview. Symbolic interactionism has been chosen as it explains how receptions are made and become intersubjective views. Postmodernism facilitates the surrounding worldview, which points out the importance to explore the intersubjective making of meaning, as meaning becomes inherently unstable in a pluralist postmodern world (see chapter 3). This means that the analysis will view receptions as constructed in interaction rather than ontologically true.

An analysis of the perception of CCA through mass media has then been chosen, since media discourses are one of the most important sources for the acquisition of specific perceptions by individuals. Meaning is especially acquired through mass media regarding those themes, which individuals did not have direct contact with (Vogel & Jia 2017: 5-6). Media does therefore contribute to a shared coherence of the reception of cultural semantic perceptions (Vogel & Jia 2017: 6). Media articles are therefore an important force in vocalizing the prominent discourses surrounding CCA and are thus well suitable to explain why CCA is perceived as political. In order to answer why the reception of CCA is politicized in Germany the analysis takes a look at the media constructed reception of CCA rather than the official narrative.

2.2 Explanation-type

The explanation-type this paper will offer to answer the research question will be a functional explanation.

Different research questions offer different types of explanations. This thesis will offer a functional explanation, which means that the answer to the research question will be based on the functions a politicised reception of CCA has for the German audience. A functional explanation can be encapsulated by a simple equation: A phenomenon X, explains its function Y for a group Z (Lippert-Rasmussen 2015: 422). In this thesis the hypothesis would just become: The reception of CCA and Chinese politics being linked functions as the stabilization of a western identity for Germany.

A *causal-feedback-mechanism* is essential for a functional explanation, since the aim is just to conclude that a phenomenon has positive functions but also to get these functions to explain why this phenomenon exists in the first place (Lippert-Rasmussen 2015: 423). This problem can be avoided by looking at causal-feedback-mechanisms, which is a "causation-chain" that explains how different functions are maintained (Lippert-Rasmussen 2015: 424). The aim is to find causational-feedback mechanisms, although it is acknowledged that correlational explanations are more likely in most cases. But without a causal-feedback-mechanism, it remains unclear, which parts of the case are relevant for answering the research question and which are not (Lippert-Rasmussen 2015: 426). It is here that the situational analysis will be helpful as it focuses on the establishment of the relations between key variables to determine the situation.

When looking at functional explanations, one therefore also has to differentiate between *latent, manifest and partly manifest functions*, where the last one refers to a phenomenon, which has some positive functions which the audience is aware of and some which are unintended (Lippert-Rasmussen 2015: 425-426). A functional explanation is merely looking for latent or partly manifest functions. Otherwise, it would be a purposeful explanation. Another important part for the functional explanations is the favourable effect Y is having on Z. If it was negative, the explanations would not be functional but dysfunctional (Lippert-Rasmussen 2015: 427). It has therefore to be stressed that my Z is a German audience. What is functional for one group does not have to be functional for another, such as Chinese Contemporary Artists. The analysis will therefore aim to explain the constructed receptions of CCA and their link to politics through the beneficial effect it has on the audience and as not conscious acts.

Lastly, a functional explanation does not deliver alternative modes for the phenomenon to be or to sustain the functions in a different way. Functional explanations are therefore suitable to diagnose the reception of CCA as politicized, situated in time and space (Lippert-Rasmussen 2015: 429).

2.3 Limitations of the project

The aim of this thesis is to explore the most recent reception conveyed by German media towards China's Contemporary Art scene and analyse why a link to China's politics is being

constructed. The analysis will thus be an analysis of the reception the German media establishes surrounding CCA exhibitions in Germany to become able to look closer at the politicization of CCA. The reception analysis excludes the production process or surrounding policies which make CCA possible in the first place. The focus on the reception process leads to an analysis which is more interested in the construction of intersubjective meaning than it is in means of production. As the aim is the construction of intersubjective meaning there has furthermore been chosen to limit the data involved to printed or online newspaper articles and reviews of CCA exhibitions, therefore excluding the direct reception of CCA by visitors of these exhibitions or actors involved in the production of CCA. The choice for an analysis of media lies in their ability to convey perspectives which reach a large audience.

The thesis will furthermore be limited in space and time. Germany has been chosen as a focal point for this paper based on its importance to the CCA scene in the west. Germany has strong ties to China as a strategic partner, especially in the cultural arena, where CCA exhibitions are widely held, as well as its engagement with the artist Ai Weiwei.

The study is also limited in time. The aim is to analyse the reception of the most recent CCA, which includes the work of both the Mao-Generation and Post-Mao Generation. The Post-Mao generation entered the international art scene approximately 20 years ago. With the aim to analyse the politicization of both generations work, the thesis will be limited to exhibitions from the last 10 years, in the hope to explore the reception of both generations as established actors in the international arena.

It is important to note that the data will be limited to the German perception of CCA. This choice excludes the Chinese perspective on CCA. The data will likewise be limited to sources written in German.

The data will furthermore be limited to exhibitions. Therefore, the reception of other forms of distribution of CCA such as private auctions are excluded. This choice has been made, as I believe that exhibitions already function as a distributor of specific messages and are more accessible to the wider public, whereas auctions functions more as a market distributor.

2.4 Presentation of the Cases

The cases used in this paper will not be chosen to verify a theory or hypothesis, which means that I won't purposefully choose extreme cases (Flyvberg 2015: 508). The cases will rather be chosen to give an overview of some of the mechanisms that lie behind the constructed link between China's politics and CCA. The cases have therefore been chosen based on the insight they might offer in the analysis. Four cases have been chosen in this thesis. China 8, The 8 of Roads, Chinese Whispers and Ai Weiwei. The cases are shortly presented in the following subchapters.

2.4.1 China 8

China 8 has been exhibited between May 15 and September 13, 2015 and is the world's biggest exhibition of CCA hosted by museums Worldwide to date. It is constructed as a set of exhibitions that are viewed in 8 cities and 9 museums, each specialized in a specific form of art. China 8 exhibited in total 120 Artists and 500 Pieces and is part of a state sponsored exchange between China and Germany. China 8's goal was to enable a differentiated extract of China's Contemporary Art Scene, according to patron of the event and former vice chancellor Sigmar Gabriel (CHINA 8 – Zeitgenössische Kunst aus China an Rhein und Ruhr 15. Mai – 13. September 2015)

The scale of China 8 has gotten this project much media attention and the connection to the Chinese and German government as funding actors and representatives might make the exhibition easily politicized and explain some of the mechanisms behind the politicization of CCA.

2.4.2 The 8 of Roads: Art in Beijing

The exhibition Die 8 der Wege: Kunst in Peking (The 8 of Roads: Art in Beijing), is an exhibition from 2014 with the aim to enable an insight into the modern art scene of Beijing and showcase the range of China's art by exhibiting young Chinese artists work from ateliers of Beijing's Art District 798 (Die 8 der Wege: Kunst in Beijing 2014). The exhibition presents over 20 artists such as Liu Wei, Sun Yuan & Peng Yu, Sun Xunand Zhao Zhao.

The second case has been chosen as it is focusing on young CCA of the post-Mao generation, which therefore might give insight into the isolated reception of the young generation of artists. The case could exemplify if the reception of this generation of artists is received differently to the generation prior, and if so could help to explain why this is the case.

2.4.3 Chinese Whispers

Chinese whispers took place between 2016-2017 and exhibited approximately 150 pieces of the private art collection of former Swiss ambassador (1995-1998) Uli Sigg. The exhibition was opened in the art museum Bern and the Centre Paul Klee and later exhibited in the MAK in Vienna before the exhibition would be donated and become a part of the Contemporary Art Museum M+ in Hong Kong. The exhibition was curated by Kathleen Bühler and follows Siggs former exhibition from 2005: Mahjong(Chinese Whispers Recent Art from the Sigg & M+ Sigg Collections)

The aim of the exhibition is to question the western perspective of China and to document the artist's position between the west and the east, tradition and progress, as well as to give a more profound insight into China's recent art scene (Chinese Whispers Recent Art from the Sigg & M+ Sigg Collections).

One of the most prominent figures in the realm of CCA is former Swiss diplomat Uli Sigg. Siig is the most important collector of CCA worldwide and played an important role shaping the reception of CCA in the west. His art collection is often discussed throughout the media in Germany. This case was therefore chosen to analyse the reception of the Uli Sigg collection. The fact that it has been covered by the German media more extensively than most other exhibitions in Germany thus made the exhibition an important part of the German reception process although it has taken place in Switzerland. Uli Siggs exhibition has thus been chosen due to its influence on the art scene which is why I believe that he has a severe impact on the CCA reception in general and because his exhibition is one of the most influential exhibitions of CCA in the last ten years.

2.4.4 Ai Weiwei

The fourth case and only solo exhibition in this thesis is Ai Weiwei, which showed the central works of the artist of the same name of the last 10 years, when it opened in 2019. It was Ai Weiwei's fifth and most recent big exhibition in Germany (Peschel 2019).

Ai Weiwei is a Chinese architect, curator, director, activist and artist, who is known for his critical views of cultural history through his conceptual art. The guiding theme of the exhibition is „Everything is art. Everything is politics", which aims to showcase the contradictions that mark our present. The exhibition was divided into two parts, with one focusing on migration and the global humanitarian crisis and the other combining two major works of importance in Ai Weiwei's career for the first time, which are "Straight" (2008-2012) and "Sunflower Seeds" (2010) (Peschel 2019)

Ai Weiwei seems to be an omnipresent figure in the CCA, which made it hard to argue, not to include his work in this analysis. His status and fame will have a severe impact on the perception of CCA and its political link, which is why it is important to look closer at the way in which he is perceived in Germany and Switzerland. I believe that the exploration of his famous image and the media constructed connection to China might uncover what Germany wants to think of China and CCA. Ai Weiwei also represents the older generation of contemporary Chinese artists and can be viewed as a representation of these, although his particular status in Germany makes him a special case.

2.5 Choice of Theory and philosophical standpoint

The following paper will have a theoretical framework based on two theories, which are Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding theory and model and William Connolly's Identity/Difference theory. The paper will furthermore be grounded in the philosophical understanding based on postmodernism and symbolic interactionism. All of these approaches will be discussed in detail in chapter 3: Theory. Here the aim is merely to present these theories and philosophical understandings and explain how they help to answer the research question.

The paper is analysing reception based on the assumption that one's own perspective is determining the way one views an object/subject and thus how one acts upon it. It does

therefore make sense to focus the analysis on the way in which reception is made. A symbolic interactionist approach is offering this understanding. The analysis from a symbolic interactionist point of view is rooted in the interaction between subject and object/subject. This leads the analysis to focus on the way in which reception is constructed, thus at the epistemological understanding of phenomenon. The deconstructive approach of postmodernity and the focus on perspectives and narratives is here helpful to explain and understand how and why certain perceptions of China arise/remain, while others are fading away. A postmodernist worldview thus bears explanatory value in that it can help to understand change or the absence of it. The focus on contextualization then helps to understand how and why different arenas are interconnected, such as politics and culture.

Hall's theory has been chosen as the explanation of how media is being produced and received. The theory Hall developed views an audience as active agents and gives attention to the range of meaning media texts can convey while simultaneously acknowledging how inherent power structures are making particular readings more likely than others. Hall's model thus offers concrete analytical tools which help to analyse how media is being used in an everyday context to establish a particular social order (see chapter 3).

Connolly's theory has been chosen as it gives a possible explanation for the politicization of CCA. The distinction of the identity and its difference binds together an understanding of different levels of identity (individual, group and state identity) and focuses on the political consequences it has for democratic action. This theory has thus been chosen, as it provides the ability to explain a specific political view of CCA in relation to an understanding of the self (German/Western) and thus bestows a function of self-reassurance to the own identity. Connolly therefore focuses his theory on the individual's understanding of the self and other, which I believe to a high degree is derived from cultural normative values and perspectivism.

With both theories being concerned with individual construction of meaning do I believe that the theories chosen will be able to complement each other. While it is Hall, who is explaining how communication is conveying a specific reception, Connolly is explaining why this reception is needed. Postmodernism and Symbolic interactionism are similarly complementing each other. While both share a similar focus on the constructive nature of perspectives, symbolic interactionism is more adept to capture how interactions are bound to a symbolic structure and create intersubjective meaning and perspectives while a postmodern worldview

emphasizes how the constructions of these perspectives become increasingly relevant in a pluralist world.

2.6 Methods: Situational analysis

Methodologically the symbolic interactionist and postmodern worldview does have to be met with an approach that is able to analyse the reception in a way which uncovers how meaning is negotiated and leads up to a specific reception.

Situational analysis, by Adele Clarke has thus been chosen as the method for analysing the reception of CCA. It is based on Glaser and Strauss' Grounded theory approach, which epistemological understanding, based on symbolic interactionism, in its emphasis on the interpretations of interaction remained a crucial part of the methodological understanding (Flick 2019: 8). Clarke combined this symbolic interactionist grounding with a postmodernist perspective which thus made the method convenient to combine with the philosophical understanding of the paper leading her to define situations as both the object the researcher is confronted with and a process of shifting meanings through phenomenon (Clarke 2005: 21).

The method has been chosen as it gives a couple of advantages in the analysis. Firstly, Clarke's approach departs from a rather positivist approach of the original grounded theory, and instead embraces the relativity of knowledge in a postmodern society, thus rejecting the notion of true meaning. In situational analysis, the researcher is thus encouraged to use his prior knowledge and become active throughout the analysis. This assertion leads to a paper from the perspective of the researcher, which gives the researcher the opportunity to discuss the interpretations inherent in analysis (Clarke 2005: 12-13). Situational analysis acknowledges therefore the situatedness and inherent perspectivism of both the knowledge produced by the researcher and the researched.

Clarkes postmodern framework is strongly influenced by the Symbolic Interactionist understanding of perspectives, where multiple collective actors make out social worlds which are in constant negotiation or conflict amongst each other to produce meaning (Clarke 2005: 37-38). The analysis will thus aim to find the different perspectives through which CCA is understood in order to find out through which perspectives reception is constructed.

The negotiations take place in arenas. Arenas encapsulate a range of discourses and involve the negotiation between many social worlds (Clarke 2005: 38). Social worlds commit through these negotiations to act upon and produce specific discourses in this arena (Clarke 2005: 37-38). This analysis will merely be looking at one social world first-hand, which are reviews and articles. But although not all perspectives are actively drawn into the analysis it will become clear through the analysis of the reviews and articles which arenas are relevant in regarding the CCA and how the social worlds in these arenas are presented or are not presented.

The aim of the analysis is thus not the definition of CCA but to explore the analytical claims from the different perspectives represented in CCA arenas (Clarke 2005: 29). The goal then becomes to make a *"thick analysis",* which is defined by Clarke as: "*The possibility of analytic extension of theorizing into other parallel or related situations (...) accomplished through the use of comparisons rather than theoretical formalization and claims of transcendence*." (Clarke 2005: 29).

The ability to make out the relation between different perspectives and detailed description of a thick analysis makes situational analysis especially useful to look closer at the variety of differences throughout common classifications within arenas (Clarke 2005: 25). Situational analysis then not just showcases the differences in approaches of politicization of CCA and different receptions but also contradictions and irregularities in these constructions and their relations.

The thick analysis and the micro-sociological approach of situational analysis then make it possible to deconstruct and re-order the phenomenon CCA. Situational analysis then offers a way to analyse how distinctive receptions are constructed and related (Clarke 2005: 8). By paying attention to the interaction and discursive making of reception, situational analysis helps to explain how specific receptions surrounding CCA are legitimized (Clarke 2005: 20). Furthermore, the inclusion of discursive meaning making of the situational analysis leads to the ability of the approach to look closer at the negotiation and representation of instabilities and contingencies in a given situation (Clarke 2005: 9). Situational analysis can thus uncover which social worlds are discursively established, which are lacking a voice and how these are related to each other. This makes situational analysis able to see which voices surrounding the reception of CCA are given much attention and which are forgotten. Situational analysis in its attention to relations, and situational knowledge is thus especially useful to see possible readings otherwise overlooked and in general to tell whole rather than ideal stories (Clarke

2005: 15). Underlying power dynamics can therefore be found through situational analysis and the way in which they are established through the analysis of the reception's perspectives. The situational analysis therefore gives the opportunity to find out where exactly it is that politicization of CCA takes place, how it takes place and possibly why it takes place.

2.6.1 Abductive approach

Situational analysis emphasizes the researcher's openness to empirical data and the benefits of a theoretical framework which makes an adaptive approach fitting.

An abductive approach is sensitive to the data and allows the researcher to be explorative and attentive, while the theoretical apparatus and the literature review help to contextualize the data and give the researcher initial ways of ordering the sometimes-overwhelming amount of data. The aim is thus to create a constant back and forth between theory and data, which feels organic.

The theoretical framework offers the researcher initial ways of ordering the sometimes-overwhelming amount of data used in a situational analysis and can thus lead the way to develop new insight into data (Layder 1998: 20).

A back and forth between induction (developing categories and concepts from data) and deduction (*clarifying the concepts with extended collection of data*) helps the researcher to keep this openness while staying focused on the task ad hands (Flick 2019: 8). Abduction thus becomes a relevant approach, when identifying and exploring possibly new knowledge regarding a phenomenon in its different shades (Flick 2019: 9) as well as giving the analysis process the ability to adapt to the circumstances of the project (Layder 1998: 29).

Since the case design will presumably produce a contextualized picture of the politicization of CCA, is it possible that the theories used will not be comprehensive enough or unfit to explain the coherences the study might encounter or will need modification in these specific cases (Flyvberg 2015: 515). An adaptive has been chose as it offers an open approach in which the empirical data and the theoretical framework offer both possibilities for new knowledge in relationship to each other as well acknowledging the limits to the singular approaches (Layder 1998b: 5).

2.6.2 Analysis strategy: Coding, Situational Maps & Relational analysis

An essential analytical for situational analysis are situational maps. Situational maps serve as strategies which help the researcher to articulate the relevant elements in a given situation and to examine the relations between them (Clarke 2005: 86). The situation in question is the media conveyed reception realm of CCA. Hence, situational analysis is not interested in the overall situation CCA finds itself in. The situational analysis of the CCA reception asks, who is involved in the creation of specific receptions of CCA and which elements matter to get to these receptions. The situational map helps the researcher to understand what the boarder situation of the reception process of CCA is. The goal is thus not to find an analytical story but the frame which is making these receptions possible (Clarke 2005: 137). Situational maps thus show how elements of a situation are interconnected. To answer why CCA is politicized in its reception includes an explanation of how it is done and what the consequences are. Clarke herself wrote that the strength of situational maps lies in "(…) *mapping the broader situation as a whole and all the elements in it at a more general and abstract level"* (Clarke 2005: 137).

To do this the data has to be coded and placed on situational maps multiple times throughout the analysis process.

Initially a situational map is developed through open coding, where each incident in the data is coded into categories (Flick 2019: 52-53). Throughout this process, the incidents are constantly compared to one another, writing down memos for their possible meaning and description (Flick 2019: 52).

The map is followed by a relational analysis, which uses the situational map to determine the relation between the elements on the map (Clarke 2005: 87). Relations are established by structural conditioned interactions, agencies of actors, access to the field, ideas, symbols, discourses etc (Clarke 2005: 87-88). Open coding can be useful to get an overview of the data and those parts, which seem important for the analysis. Open coding thus roughly carves out the path the analysis probably will take and gives the researcher an overview of how the research question will be answered and what is missing (Layder 1998b: 6). To start out with merely focusing on codes based on the empirical data in the first reading, helps to develop

"core codes" based solely on the empirical data and find the core statements and themes throughout the data (Layder 1998b: 6).

When the first phase of open coding is done, the situational map is followed by a relational analysis, which uses the situational map to determine the relation between the elements on the map (Clarke 2005: 87). Here, *axial coding* takes place, which aims to further differentiate the established categories. Coding is now supposed to become more formal, to establish relationships between categories (Flick 2019: 60). Through axial coding, it becomes evident what role causes, context and those involved play in the construction of a phenomenon (Flick 2019: 60). Specific incidents are not compared to other incidents anymore, but to properties of that category, which are developed from the first stage comparison of incident to incident (Flick 2019: 52). It is here that the theoretical framework helps in the coding process. Relations can here be put in relation based on the theoretical understanding to find a different mode to organized data, than just based on the data itself (Jacobsen 2007: 268). Different core codes and analytical codes have to be compared, modified and reworked multiple times throughout the relational analysis. There might be the need for new concepts when the old codes no longer satisfy the empirical data (Jacobsen 2007: 268). When these codes and their relation are established in new situational maps, the selective coding starts. Selective coding elaborates the properties on a higher level of abstraction.

"This step elaborates the development and integration of axial coding in comparison with other groups and focuses on potential core concepts or core variables." (Flick 2019: 62).

More and more categories are being reduced, which ends up in a theory with a small number of concepts, which relation to each other is more or less clear (Flick 2019: 52). The focus lies here in going beyond the descriptive level and attaching concepts to categories (Flick 2019: 62). What the researcher then ends up with is the project map. Project maps are the final product that draw on the previous established maps. They are the maps encapsulating the particular aspect of the project telling the project's analytical story. While a situational map frames the story as a whole and on an abstract level, does the project map tell the analytical story of the project (Clarke 2005: 137).

2.7 Choice of Data

The media included will be based on German media sources since the goal of the study is to find out how the German media is perceiving CCA as linked to Chinese politics. The information will be gathered from online media sources with a focus on reviews and newspaper articles of the different exhibitions. The analysis will thus rely on second hand data from journalists and critiques. Articles and reviews have been chosen to explore how a general intersubjective perception is being constructed. These are conveying reception of CCA to a large audience, which is why the analysis of articles and reviews have been preferred to other approaches such as interviews.

In the choice of articles and reviews have a range of newspaper been included, to get access to different discourses and perspectives regarding the reception of CCA. Hence, local and national articles have been included into the data as well as articles from regular newspaper as well as art magazines. Furthermore has data from major Switzer media been included. This choice has been made as Switzer newspaper are often read in Germany as well and consequently play a role in the making of German reception.

2.8 Quality Criteria

The quality criteria of a given scientific study are based on three criteria which are internal validity, reliability and external validity. A discussion of these showcases what the strengths and weaknesses of a scientific study are and how to counteract the weaknesses.

2.8.1 Internal Validity

Internal validity is the ability to measure or analyse, what it is one wants to analyse (De Vaus 2009:29). The research design is multiple case studies in a qualitative approach. Case studies and qualitative research are especially well adapted to achieve high internal validity, since they are not just looking at predetermined causal variables and their effect on a phenomenon but also on the interrelation of various causes (De Vaus 2009: 234). It is thus harder for qualitative case studies to confuse cause with correlation also since they emphasize a holistic understanding which makes it easier to determine variables which might be of particular

importance for the research. This makes this approach especially well adapted for an explanatory approach (De Vaus 2009: 235).

Also, situational analysis is to a high degree based on contextualized knowledge and finding meaning in the way things are said rather than what is actually said. This means that the analysis to a large degree will be based on my interpretation of the text. Because I can't be certain that my understanding of the text is valid, might my intern validity be compromised (Groeben 1980: 81-82). It is thus important to base the analysis on logical conclusions. The adaptive analysis strategy and the array of coding will help me to evaluate and re-evaluate consistently throughout the analysis as well as to become able to give attention to both the theory and the data. Throughout this process, different interpretations will be tested to secure the internal validity. The interpretation will also be documented throughout the analysis with active quotes to give the reader the chance to understand the decisions made. It has to be noted, that the quotes will be a translation from the originated German quotes and can thus bear translational bias. The originals will be available for readers as well.

2.8.2 External Validity

External Validity is the ability to generalize into a wider field. Case studies have been criticized for the lack of external validity, as they built no basis for statistical generalization since they cannot be viewed as representative for a demography (De Vaus 2009: 237). As the approach chosen in this paper is the adaptive approach rather than a deductive approach is it furthermore neither theoretical generalization which can be applied as the theoretical framework is merely grounding the analysis rather than testing it (De Vaus 2009: 237).

Therefore, the external validity remains relatively low. But since the aim of a qualitative case study as well as the symbolic interactionist approach is not a high external validity but rather to explore which mechanisms are responsible for certain receptions and why they exist, does it seem more important to focus on the internal validity.

2.8.3 Reliability

Reliability is the design's ability to replicate the project by other researchers and get the same results. The reliability of a qualitative case study is relatively low, since different researchers

could focus on different aspects of cases when trying to answer the research question. It is therefore particularly important in qualitative research to specify the conditions under which the analysis has been taking place. It is furthermore important to be transparent in the choices made throughout the design and the definition and understanding of key elements of the study. I therefore tried throughout the study to be as transparent, explaining and descriptive of the choices made as possible (De Vaus 2009: 238). Furthermore, a specific logic behind the selection of data and cases will be explained for the reliability of the study. A strategic case selection has taken place with the choices explained in subchapter 3.2. A selective case approach has been chosen, since the small number of cases screened throughout the analysis would not make a random cases selection more representable than it is now. Although it has been argued that selective case approaches bear the danger of overlooking important variables, I do believe, that the pre-screening of cases before selecting them has been the right decision, since they have been chosen based on their ability to provide examples of different aspects of the phenomena in question (De Vaus 2009: 240).

3.0 Theory

The following chapter will give an overview of the theoretical framework used in this paper. It will furthermore review the political standpoint of the paper. In the first subchapters, the postmodern approach, William Connolly's identity theory, a symbolic interactionist media reception and Stuart Hall's Encoding Decoding theory will be explained. The explanation of key concepts: Culture, and micro-politics will follow. The last part of this chapter will explain how these approaches fit together and will be applied in the analysis.

3.1 Postmodernity

In international relations, postmodernity is characterized by a rejection of epistemological totalization (Devetak 1999: 67). Modernity's perspective on rationality based on the thought of enlightenment does not seem suitable in a postmodern world anymore (Tomassini 1994: 99). The refusal of rationality inherent in a thinking subject and thus the viewpoint of a souverain actor leads postmodern thinkers to view the subject as a free actor, embedded in historicity of social events (Tomassini 1994: 100-101). Postmodernity hence looks at the nexus of rationality and praxis, ideology and experience/knowledge, therefore focusing their studies on differentiation rather than uniformity (Tomassini 1994: 101). Postmodernism is thus characterized by its deconstructive approach, taking nothing for granted and de-centring subjects/objects, by refusing a unified agent as a given (Albert 1994: 50) (Devetak 1999: 71). This shift in paradigm from classical IR approaches invites the study of the construction subjects, in which it is subject to social relations as much as it is forming and reinforcing them (Devetak 1999: 71). The goal of postmodernist studies is therefore to display what specific conceptions of a subject functions as ideologically and politically and how, where and when they are constructed (Devetak 1999: 71)

Globalization and a global society is blurring the lines between national borders, resulting in the relationships of social groups and national societies to play an increasing role in the international system. Many of the new actors involved in matters of international relations are independent social groups, apart from states (Tomassini 1994: 102-103). This implies a growing number of power centres are shaping the understanding of states today (Tomassini

1994: 103). These actors represent a variety of values and opinions which have been shaped inside a state in different arenas (Tomassini 1994: 103).

Perspectives and the resulting narratives we construct around an event, subject or an object (phenomenon) are central in postmodernism (Devetak 1999: 67). It is therefore not a question of what is ontologically true or real, but rather how phenomena are performatively constituted through their narrative (Devetak 1999: 68). The performed practice will have an ontological effect on the phenomena, which means that we have to understand phenomena in constant progress and under change (Devetak 1999: 71) Thus ontologically, totalization becomes impossible (Devetak 1999: 71).

The dissolvement of concrete reference points, like truth and subject, means that reality's negotiation is formulated and changed in the edges and boundaries of discourse (Albert 1994: 56). As a consequence a concrete sense of legitimacy, function or content does not exist anymore, since these are viewed as products of constant negotiation of different interest groups. Therefore the phenomenon can't be captured by ideal types of modern thinkers. Understanding is derived from internalization and interpretation of a variety of specific cases. The importance of contextualization will lead to inconclusive and ambiguous appearances of phenomena, which won't be able to fully be categorized and thus put under constant questioning of their identity (Tomassini 1994: 103) Postmodern perspectives are therefore especially suitable to understand changes in international relations, as they are include a variety of possibly ambiguous explanations (Tomassini 1994: 102).

Events, subjects and objects become open to discussion, leaving a fluid and ambiguous notion of reality and an increased amount of actors and themes being up for debate (Tomassini 1994: 99). Simulation and representation of reality become more and more tools for definitions of reality (Albert 1994: 54).

Political scientist Mathias Albert describes the importance of the media for postmodernity where media and information are affecting our reading of events (Albert 1994: 53). Space becomes a liquid notion, where inclusion and exclusion is negotiated online (Albert 1994: 53). On a more micro scale understanding, postmodernity has large consequences for the individuals in their production of opinions, beliefs and understandings of identity. Relativism is therefore an omnipresent feature of postmodernity, where pluralist truth, ethics and value become relative and thus equal in claim.

3.2 William Connolly: Identity/Difference

The political scientist William Connolly establishes a political identity theory in his book Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiation of Political Paradox (original 1991).

Connolly defines identity, no matter if individual or social, as necessarily relational and collective. Identity is established and upheld through socially recognized differences, which means that an integral process of upholding an identity is to actively contrast it to what it is not (Connolly 2002: 64/xiv).

Through this process the difference between their own identity and other identities are established.

After establishing an identity and difference, Connolly goes on adding a normative dimension into his theory by acknowledging two problems regarding this construction which he calls, the two problems of evil. The first problem of evil explains the existence of evil in the world, given a good god and hence to find out who is responsible for evil. The first problem of evil thus is the realization that good and evil exist in the world (Connolly 2002: xv).

The second problem of evil builds on this assumption and becomes the basis for Connolly's theory. Connolly is not concerned with the question of why evil exists, but rather with the structural conditions and societal functions which are constructing the understanding of evil (Connolly 2002: 8). Connolly is thus rejecting the notion of an inherent evil in the world with the second problem of evil, but rather sees it as a social construction.

It is here that Connolly distinguishes between difference and the other. With the knowledge of evil necessarily existing, resentment politics are established through moral codes to identify evil. What is different then becomes other. The construction of an other as evil then establishes the self as the good. The self consequently becomes the inverted image of the other and therefore frees the self from doubts regarding its own identity (Connolly 2002: 8). The other is then constructed in order to secure the own identity (Connolly 2002: 64) (Connolly 2002: xiv). This construction of identity although pre-structured is mainly understood as contingent. This contingency makes the own identity inherently unstable. Othering then becomes a tool to protect contingent constructions of the self in building a dichotomy through a normative

dimension (Connolly 2002: 1) (Guillaume 2011: 23). Othering can therefore not be understood as a necessity for the self as a psychological disposition, but is regarded by Connolly as a *structural temptation*, (Connolly 2002: 9). It is a temptation as the own identity claims the good and ethical while the other is constructed based on their moral failings and abnormalities (Connolly 2002: xv). The ethically good identity is based on a pre-structured normative societal order, which establishes power and hegemony through ethics (Connolly 2002: xv).

Connolly sees an inherent political paradox inscribed into this configuration of identity and other. The normative social order presupposes certain standards for identity and responsibility. Simultaneously acting upon those means excluding and marginalizing those it is applied upon (Connolly 2002: xv, 12).

Connolly thus comments: "*The ambiguity vocalized in the paradox of difference confronts disjunctions between limitations on diversity intrinsic to a specific order and the demand for diversity that flows from an ethic of individuality*" (Connolly 2002: 83).

Ethics are not based on ontological truths, but are rather contestable through the notion of "ethics of cultivation" (Connolly 2002: 19). Political concepts are therefore contestable and lead to divergent orientations which are expressed in public everyday life (Connolly 2002: 211). Connolly shows the same viewpoints with the own identity, where the construction of identity cannot be viewed as fixed but is ambiguous.

3.3 Symbolic Interactionist Media Reception

This paper's aim is to analyse the politicized reception of CCA. Reception analysis is a methodological and theoretical strain, whose objective is to study the reception of a phenomenon by viewing it not as an object but as an experience (Holly 2002: 450). This view of reception is interactive. focuses on the interaction between the phenomenon and the recipient. With this approach, the analysis will be able to look at the processes which make specific receptions possible and explain why certain collective dominant receptions exist. The reception analysis in this study will therefore be based on a symbolic interactionist worldview, which keynote is the understanding that the meaning of phenomena originates in the interaction between two or more actors. The symbolic understanding of the viewers always goes beyond the viewed object, based on the understanding of Alfred Schutzes *lebenswelt (lifeworld)*

(Schütz & Luckmann 2017: 29). This means that context plays an important role for the interaction between viewer and object and thus for the analysis of reception, since it is constituting the understanding or reception of the object (Blumer 2013: 65)

The text is therefore understood as reciprocal organized, which means that it is pre-structuralizing viewer activities. This pre-structuralization of the viewer activity is merely possible because the text holds a set of symbolic qualities, which situates it in a universe of already existing texts and relegates it to existing knowledge of the viewer (Mikos 2015: 328). The text is supplying symbolic material in the interaction with the recipient. This will over time influence the recipient's understanding of a phenomenon by altering the recipient's perspective which is called acquisition (Mikos 2015: 326-327) (Bucher 2012: 42). This means that the acquired knowledge, which becomes intersubjective knowledge through media acquisition cannot be viewed as an abreast of meanings and interpretations but has to be seen as a systematic interlocked knowledge, in which elements are interactively contextualized on the basis of the lifeworld of the recipient. Lifeworlds are thus constantly changing and communication is always based and understood based on the recipient's perspective.

The notion of lifeworld and a shared symbolic (intersubjective) understanding implies the existence of a structural dimension (Bucher 2012: 23-24). An interactive reception analysis focuses its study on media socialization and an interactional role assumption (based on symbolic interactionist theory of socialization), to explain the control functions of communication by mass media (Bucher 2012: 24). Role acquisition is a social conveyance which structures social behaviour. The roles conveyed are the basis for the resulting interpretation of actions regarding a media text, thus making the conveyed communication intersubjective rather than subjective. The focus does therefore not lie in the subject, but in the societal structures constructing this subject and their decoding (Bucher 2012: 24).

This means that norms, collective beliefs or values are not determining the action of individuals, but that they are negotiated in the interaction between subject and subject/object (Blumer 2013: 64). It does therefore make sense to analyse the reception of CCA as the specific reception of CCA is constituted through the object subject interaction. To find out what constitutes this interaction (which context lies behind this interaction and makes it possible) helps then to explain why a specific reception of CCA is prevailing while others are not. CCA is therefore viewed as a media phenomenon in this paper. Art is a media which aims to convey a specific message. But the interest of the analysis lies not in the exploration of what this

specific message is. It rather lies in the negotiation leading to the specific reception. Art is thus not just an intended message but also a cultural practice, which is symbolically negotiating with a pre-structured viewer how CCA is understood.

3.4 Stuart Hall: Encoding and Decoding

British sociologist and cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall has developed the Encoding and Decoding theory in 1973 in his essay *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse.* Hall's theoretical approach makes him able to view power relations encoded in the production and communication of medial distributed messages as well as the decoding of these messages and their social application. According to Hall, media does have a variety of possible interpretations when it is communicated. The specific interpretation results from the divergence between the intentions of the producer of the text, the situation surrounding this specific type of media and recipient (Funk 2007: 50). This is because communication is organized into coded signs, which are placed into a chain of discourses (Hall 1973: 1-2). Discourses are not equally strong in a given social order. Communication is embedded in specific discourses which makes their message more or less likely to be perceived by a specific audience (Hall 1973: 1-2). To become able to encode and decode a specific message to an audience, rules of language and an intersubjective understanding of codes between the producers of messages and the audience are necessary (Hall 1973: 1-2). A message thus entails a linguistic and symbolic position in a communicative exchange. Encoding and decoding a specific message are therefore understood as two "relatively autonomous" processes.

A communicative event can be structured into four different stages according to Hall. Firstly a message has to become *produced* and therefore encoded, which means that it has to be constructed within the institutional and structural limitations of a given media platform (Hall 1973: 2-3). Secondly does the encoding entail the messages appropriation into a wider discourse, which means its political and socio-cultural system (Hall 1973: 3). Through the encoding process, a message becomes presentable as a meaningful discourse and takes on a *message-form* (Hall 1973: 3). The message-form is defined by Hall as*: "the necessary form of the appearance of the event in its passage from source to receiver"* (Hall 1973: 2).

The third stage is the *use* stage and regards the *decoding* process of the send message by an audience. Because the encoding process is based on a shared symbolic system by the producers of a message and the receiving audience, the message is likely to become decoded systematically and understood in the way, in which it has been intended by the encoding producers of the message (Hall 1973: 6). The last stage is the *reproduction* stage, which concerns itself with the effect of a decoded message; the acquisition (Hall 1973: 4, 18)

But although a message is part of a *systematically distorted communication order,* and therefore more likely to be interpreted in the producer's intended way, the decoding process is also highly influenced by individual life worlds. An audience containing heterogeneous groups can therefore develop different understandings of a message. Hall differentiated between three readings of a text; the preferred reading, the negotiated reading and the oppositional reading.

The *preferred reading/meaning* is the most likely reading, which is in alignment with the ideologically structured message sent (Funk 2007: 50). In the preferred reading, the consumer accepts the codes conveyed and reproduces them by operating within the conveyed ideological, political and social order, imprinted in this message (Hall 1973: 13-14).

Another, but less likely reading is the *negotiated reading/meaning*, which is the reading of a text that is accepting the dominant position but also resists this position by adapting it to its own circumstances (Funk 2007: 50). Hall calls these particular or situated logics, which arise from different groups of people with unequal access to resources and consequently power (Hall 1973: 18) These people negotiate between "*adaptive and oppositional elements"* (Hall 1973: 17). The reader acknowledges the conveyed construction of social reality and the legitimacy of a hegemonic discourse constructing this meaning, but at the situational/ local level, also changes these rules and constructs exceptions.

The last reading is the *oppositional reading/meaning*, which is the view of the people outside of the hegemonial dominant position. In the oppositional position the literate meaning is conveyed, but the symbolically encoded meaning is not. The reader decodes and recontextualizes the conveyed message into a framework of reference based on his/her own background and does therefore understand the message in a different way than it was intended (Hall 1973: 18)

With these analytical terms Hall analyses dominance and subversion throughout an ideological and critical framework (Funk 2007: 51).

This means that although an artist makes a certain interpretation more likely by coding it in a certain way, its meaning is not inherent in the object but is bestowed upon in the decoding process. The production of meaning is grounded in situated knowledge. Art does here function as a medium that holds meaning and is thus the mediator between artist and recipient (Funk 2007: 51). Because there is a variety of acquiring knowledge for the recipients, the reception is always offering a possibility of resistance against the hegemonic dominant ideologies (Funk 2007: 51-52). Cultural studies did therefore always already have an inherent political agenda, by challenging ideology, structure and hegemony (Lewis 2002: 15).

3.5 The importance of Culture

The impact of culture in international relations (IR) has been theorized and discussed on multiple occasions, ranging from Huntington's *trajectories of international relations* of cultural aspects to Marxist theory, connecting culture to power (Harshe 2006: 3947-3948). This diversity of understanding culture makes it helpful to clarify the understanding of the term used in this paper help. Two understandings of culture will be adapted.

The first understanding of culture is based on a symbolic interactionist and cultural studies understanding of the world. According to that culture consists of fundamentally learned imaginings and meanings which constitute a shared meaning system and make community and communication possible (Lewis 2002: 23) (Scott 2014). Culture is thus the basis for inter-subjective understanding in that it is a shared perspective, which is structuring the meaning and understanding of the world and its elements for actors such as individuals, social groups or nation-states to navigate in it (Scott 2014). A different cultural background will hence lead to different actors making different choices when faced with similar situations (D'Hooghe: 2014: 47).

As the understanding of culture is a symbolic interactionist in this paper, culture as the formation of meaning has to be understood as being constantly transformed in an unstable system, where meanings are negotiated (Lewis 2002: 23). Actions might be structured by the cultural background, but can change their connotation or reinforce culture in that they are enacted differently or in accordance to a specific realm of rules, therefore making culture performative as well (Buchanan 2010).

An individual identity is structured around different cultural backgrounds which may be overlapping or stand in contrast to each other (national culture, ethnic culture, family culture, working culture etc). (Lewis 2002: 23-24) It is here that one culture is distinguished from others and manifests in specific performances and products.

Based on this understanding of culture, this paper could argue that culture is the basis of the German identity, which is arranging one's own identity and thus the German perspective of the world. This would mean that CCA is perceived through this perspective which attributes CCA with a pre-existing intersubjective German understanding of what contemporary art is and what Chinese art is, thus focusing the analysis on the German perspective rather than the Chinese. It therefore facilitates the understanding of CCA as a concrete culture which bears cultural symbols and acknowledges the structuring role culture and cultural background plays in the decoding of these symbols.

The second understanding of culture adapted in this paper is a rather pragmatic and less fundamental one. Art amongst other goods is viewed as a cultural product. Cultural products are set in a specific arena, which is characterized by a specific conduct and understanding of what culture is and what art is. CCA is connected to a specific part of the cultural and creative industry, or the Chinese-German cultural exchange agreement etc. and does therefore fulfil specific functions and is understood in a certain way. The understanding of culture as a cultural realm concerning art, music, theatre etc. and the understanding of culture as a holistic life perspective have to be differentiated here, but are both playing important roles in this paper.

The choice to analyse the politicization of a cultural movement instead of a political movement directly has been made to explore how intersubjective meaning is made throughout different social arenas. Cultural exchange that is exhibited rather than sold aims to convey a certain message which is understood through a prestructured understanding of the world. To analyse the reception of a part of the cultural production of China as a cultural movement/phenomenon does give the advantage to explore the established meanings and analyse where meanings are negotiated. This makes it possible to analyse how the political understanding of China by the German and Swiss audience is affecting the cultural export of China. It explains why some aspects of CCA are politicized and others are not, as well as explaining why some aspects are negotiated while others are solidified.

3.6 The importance of micro-politics and a qualitative approach

An integral part of social identity is the distinction between the self and the other. Idealist or Enlightenment philosophers like Kant and Hegel found this distinction necessary, to achieve a naturalized national identity and group solidarity (Lebow 2008: 474, 486). Their understanding of culture as the basis for identity viewed the construction of the other as necessary to uphold a national identity, thus establishing a rather deterministic view of identity (Lebow 2008: 487). The stabilization of one's own identity through the creation of an outgroup has often been used in IR to analyse political, territorial or ethnic conflict or war scenarios (Lebow 2008: 474). And while this construction of the other as a hostile entity can help to explain fundamental mechanisms in such conflicts, I do believe, that the notion of social identity and state identity (understood as an ideological and cultural construction rather than an ontological real one) might become increasingly relevant in a postmodern world outside of conflict and war analysis (Lebow 2008: 488).

A postmodern world is characterized by its interdependent relationships and pluralistic values interacting amongst each other. Globalization and a global society is blurring the lines between national borders, resulting in the relationships of social groups and national societies to play an increasing role in the international system. Many of the new actors involved in matters of international relations are independent social groups, apart from states (Tomassini 1994: 102-103). This means that a growing number of power centers are shaping the understanding of states today (Tomassini 1994: 103). These emergent decentralized states in IR and the increase of actors involved in policy making and forming relationships between states lead to a need to examine these new power configurations outside of active conflict and interstate war to focus on non-state social groups instead impacting the international state agenda or bilateral relations indirectly.

Micro politics do allow the researcher to capture a wide range of mechanisms, which might have the capacity to explain tensions outside of interstate conflict or war and the impact it has on individuals, groups and thus also state decisions, allowing a grounding of macropolitics in micropolitical studies (Solomon & Steele 2017: 271). In the tradition of Erving Goffman and others inspired by the Chicago School, it can therefore be argued that the analysis of the mundane and ordinary is the analysis of macro political manifestation of structures (Solomon & Steele 2017: 279-280). Micro political analysis can hence enable a broader and

contextualized understanding of structural and intra-subjective effects. This approach is therefore able to offer insight into global political changes which are unlikely to be grasped by macro-systemic analysis" (Solomon & Steele 2017: 283).

3.7 Choice of theory and theoretical Application

The aim of the paper is to give a possible explanation for why and how CCA is being politicized. To do this, I have chosen to combine two overall worldviews: Postmodernity and Symbolic interactionism.

A postmodern worldview has been chosen as it facilitates the possibility to explore how mechanisms outside of the state perspectives do influence actions of states . It does therefore seem logical to depart from the traditional international relations theories and focus on an approach, which is characterized by multiple configurations outside of the state to state interaction. By exploring how social groups such as the CCA are part of a reception process of China in general offers a perspective on how China's political image influences the perception of other spheres, in this case the cultural export, and vice versa (by having art reinforcing/ differentiating positions). The acknowledgement of the influence a rising number of actors have in the contingent making of meaning in a postmodern world, makes this approach useful in that it repositions this negotiation for meaning into a worldview in which it is of increasing importance to pay attention to these negotiations in order to become able to navigate through an increasingly pluralist and complex society. A postmodern approach puts the consequences of pluralization and differentiation at the centre of international relations. Questions of perspective and thus the making of one's own and others identity then become of pertinent importance as they become the bundled representation of he own perception of a phenomenon.

As postmodernity expounds the understanding of a fixed identity, it becomes interesting to look at the way in which the negotiation of the Chinese identity is taking place. The loss of a fixed identity will lead to an uncertainty according to multiple philosophers such as Bauman, Giddens or Beck. It leaves individuals with the wish for certainty and stability, to become able to navigate more easily in a more complex world. It is here Connollys theory of identity is adapted in the paper, as it problematizes the dichotomic construction of own and other.

Connollys theory furthermore offers an explanation for the process of othering which also includes the societal and political consequences this process could bear with it.

Connolly's theory offers a possible explanation for the othering of CCA. It will be expected that this othering is unfolding by mechanisms of politicization to connect CCA to China's poor political image. Connolly's identity theory has been chosen as it gives the possibility to look closer at the functions the othering of Chinese culture has for the German identity and is not focusing on what China has to change in its cultural export to change its identity. Furthermore, the focus on normativity (understood as a tool to secure one's own identity) is useful in that it allows the analysis to explore where it is that the German construction of identity is threatened, aligned or open for negotiation. CCA is therefore understood as a social arena in which these identification processes take place. The theory enables the analysis of the tactics of self-identity by *probing the structures that maintain the plausibility of those configurations, and by analyzing from a perspective that problematizes the certainty of one's self-identity the effects these structures and tactics have on others.* (9-10)

A symbolic interactionist worldview has been chosen as it is explaining the micro-sociological processes structuring the cultural perspective inherent in reception. So while the postmodern worldview and Connollys theory acknowledge that meaning is becoming more and more unstable and that fixed identities are not suitable for a postmodern world, even dangerous to democracy, these theories do not explain how exactly meaning is made. Symbolic interactionism taps into this area, and has the capacity to explain how reception is negotiated. An interactionist reception analysis was therefore chosen, as it also fits to the understanding of postmodernity, where meaning is not inherent to an object, but is constantly negotiated and subject to change.

Symbolic interactionism does not just offer an insight into the structuring of interactions, but does also focus on the intersubjective cultural background which is making an intercultural understanding harder to attain. Symbolic interactionism thus gives a different explanation than Connollys theory and postmodernism does, as it is focusing on the intercultural symbols which are structuring the understanding of a phenomenon. This understanding is shaped in the interaction of subject and object/subject and thus explaining how reception is made. Symbolic interactionism hence gives the researcher a concrete explanation of how singular interaction is structuring a wider understanding of the world. It therefore seems fitting to use this

understanding to look closer at specific reviews to make out how symbols are used to reinforce, build or change a specific narrative of CCA and China.

The symbolic interactionist perspective of the paper declares that the meaning of a phenomenon, action or the world in general is negotiated in the interaction between subject and subject, or subject and object. The making of meaning of what CCA is and CCA as part of a political practice, is thus contextual and relational. To find out how CCA is connected to the Chinese identity and Chinese politics and how that is affecting the reception of CCA is therefore based on the interaction between the object (CCA) and the subject (the reviewer). This makes symbolic interactionism able to put an analytical focus on the different ways in which CCA is becoming a symbol for China and its political status and how CCA is a distributor of these symbols. Symbolic interactionism then allows for the emphasis in the analysis to lie in the different modes in which cultural practices of CCA exhibitions are constructed and interpreted similarly and thus shape an intersubjective reception.

Postmodernism does help the analysis in its inclusive worldview. Through a postmodern worldview the aim of the analysis is not to provide clear answers to problems in the reception but due to the emphasis on plurality and ambiguity to focus on the importance of the formation of meaning as well as to analyse how situations are opened up to intersubjective meaning.

Symbolic interactionism and postmodernism fit together in that they both emphasize the formation of meaning. Symbolic interactionism is as a micro-sociological approach able to explain how meaning is made in interaction and leads to intersubjective understanding. Postmodernism emphasizes the importance of this approach as it understands the world as increasingly complex and is losing fixed reference points to cope with this development. Furthermorea postmodern worldview enables micropolitical and micro sociological approaches to become sources of reference to understand complexities in problems and phenomenon from a different perspective than a world order or state perspective and thus give the opportunity to include different knowledge into IR research.

Both worldviews acknowledge that meaning is made from a variety of different points of view and hence can differentiate. The central task of the analysis   is to discover how intersubjectively acknowledged views of CCA are being constructed. The construction of reality implies a social constructivist background for both symbolic interactionism and postmodernism.

Stuart Hall's theory has first and foremost been chosen, as it sheds light on the structures ordering reception and make certain perspectives more likely to be adapted than others. Reception is still constructed in the interaction between object/subject and subject. Hall thus embraces this symbolic interactionist view of reception more than the product of one way transmission of information. Instead, Hall clarifies that messages must obey the symbolic and social order of mediums and the audience they reach to become able to convey a message. Halls introduction of concrete structural limits and the consequences it has for the decoding of messages makes the inherent power relations behind formation of meaning through media a priority of the analysis. Hall's theory encourages to look at the discourses introduced into the CCA reception. By using Hall's theory, the researcher gets to focus on the ideological standpoints conveyed to find out where meaning is naturalised or opposed and where it has to be negotiated. Hall enables the researcher to view these articles inside a power dynamic which upholds certain ideological beliefs, that are the basis for social identity hence giving the opportunity to deconstruct the phenomenon and to find out where these power centres lie.

4.0. Literature review

The following chapter is aimed at supplying an overview of the research conducted prior on the topic of the thesis. It is divided into two parts. The first part is the connection between politics and art. I'd like to go through different understandings of the politicization of art in this subchapter and to give an overview of their connection, since the role of politics in art has frequently been theorized over time. The second subchapter will regard the media coverage and western perception of China in terms of its politics and art.

4.1 The Connection of Politics and Art

Two of the most well-known understandings of art and politics come from the Frankfurt School and Cultural studies, which will be presented briefly.

The Frankfurt school supplies early modern thoughts regarding Art and its politicization. Walter Benjamin was one of the most prominent figures of this strain of thought. According to Benjamin, the reproduction capacities of art did change art's function to gain a political and democratic dimension (Funk 2007: 37). Reproduction meant that mass culture was possible, thus making it receptive to a variety of social groups (Funk 2007: 37-38). Theodor W. Adorno found the reproduction capacities and the increasing commercialization of art to lead to a market dependency. This means that art would fulfill a "*doubling effect*" of pre-existing thought and world order. Dependent Art fixates the world order of the perceived and denies them critical reflection of alternative modes of society (Funk 2007: 42). Benjamin and Adorno thus acknowledge the liberalization of replication and mass production through arts separation from the elitist sphere. This reconfiguration of art does also connect it to other social spheres, which according to Adorno leads to the consolidation of already existing structures. The reception of an artist can therefore become viewed as controlled by other forces than his artistic agency, which makes the politicization of art easier to defend.

Similarly to Adorno, researcher J. Maggio sees inherent power relations displayed in art. Maggio defines a political act as the creation of meaning through one's actions (Maggio 2020: 367). The creation of new meaning redefines the political landscape and opens up a democratic process of negotiating reality (Maggio 2020: 367). Maggio therefore develops a new understanding of the relationship between politics and art by departing from the Frankfurter Schools separation of art from other societal spheres such as politics, to view art as a political

act in itself (Maggio 2020: 344-345). Maggio finds that art is revealing the limitations of dominant worldviews and the closed democratic space (Maggio 2020: 354).

The everyday culture hence plays an important role in the construction of meaning and thus individual action. Cultural studies therefore define themselves as a political project (Funk 2007: 49). In *Reading the Popular* (1989) John Fiske, a prominent figure of the cultural studies, described the production of meaning through the role of recipients regarding popular culture (Funk 2007: 52). According to Fiske, culture is made accessible to individuals through the consumption of cultural goods. Popular culture is therefore a result of the resources people in power provide out of which the recipients can choose how to bestow meaning and identity upon (Funk 2007: 52). If individuals are not able to derive their identity from the cultural resources, these will not become cultural phenomena. Through the rework of recipients, the whole meaning of popular culture is thus negotiated (Funk 2007: 53). Fiske views individuals as repressed, through hegemonic produced goods but also as active actors, who are reworking cultural products in order to build their social identity (Funk 2007: 52).

Fiske's understanding of art makes it clear that the success of CCA in the west to a large degree relies on the meaning, people bestowe upon it to build their own identity. The meaning of popular culture, such as CCA is thus reflective of a societal need. The interdependence of art and other spheres, as Maggio saw it, involves other discourses into an overall reception of CCA such as politics. To politicize CCA hence gives insight into needs regarding the construction of their own social national or continental identity and what the west needs China and CCA to be.

Yao Yung-Wen gives a possible explanation for the western perception of CCA from a Chinese perspective in her article *China's modern image: contemporary Chinese art* from 2016. The central implicit theme surrounding CCA is according to Yang Wen the divergence in China's cultural identity production in a post-Mao China (Yang Wen 2016: 71). The CCA, which has emerged as a child of the liberated Chinese society, reveals the Chinese society's transition into a globalized/ westernized society on the one hand and an anti-westernization spirited society on the other (Yang Wen 2016: 51). CCA has therefore become the mirror of "*the cultural and political contestation between China and the West*" (Yang Wen 2016: 57). The CCA discourse can hence not be separated from politics according to Yang Wen The changing internal policies surrounding CCA make it an indicator for the permitted openness of the Chinese society. This openness is determined by the political situation the CCP finds itself in (Yang Wen 2016: 63).

The CCPs changing attitudes towards the CCA then showcase its importance as a tool of representation of Chinese contemporary culture (Yang Wen 2016: 63).

4.2 Media Coverage on China

Political scientist Mathias Albert highlights the importance of the media for postmodernity where media and information are affecting our reading of events severely (Albert 1994: 53). When a range of independent media is referring to a phenomenon in a similar way (in terms of symbols and semantics) over an extended period of time, intersubjective symbols are emerging, which are reaching beyond a single text (Vogel 2017: 48). The text of reference is thus inherently ascribed a range of seemingly naturalized characteristics, which lead to specific dominant perceptions of phenomena (Vogel 2017: 49). The media therefore plays a dominant role in constructing these perceptions (Thimm 2017: 39). A linkage between the perception of China in its political terms and the perception of CCA thus makes it important to look into to establish how China is perceived in the west and by German media.

Looking closer at the portrayal of China in German media showcases a rather undifferentiated and negative perception of China, which is reinforcing stereotypical perceptions of China, rather than deconstructing them. Similarly, author Michael Poerner writes that even though the diversity of themes regarding China has been growing over the last years, the focus and core agenda of German media seems to lie in the coverage of conflict and violence (Vogel & Jia 2017: 11). Vogel and Jia view Eurocentric perspectivism as one of the most pressing challenges for intercultural communication regarding China and Germany (Vogel & Jia 2017: 14).

Also Researcher Caja Thimm, has looked closer at the different themes German print media have addressed and found a lack of journalistic balance in the German media. Also according to Thimm, the media is projecting mainly a stereotypical image of China and Chinese people (Thimm 2017: 46) where the role of the media plays a dominant role in constructing the general view of China and Chinese people (Thimm 2017: 39) Thimm finds the coverage of China though to be more differentiated as it has been a couple of years ago, in that it loosened up in its narrow and negative perspective on China (Thimm 2017: 41). This perspective is skewed in the themes through which China has been portrayed. Culture was connected with the most positive attributes, especially in regard to Chinese artists, mostly Ai Weiwei (Thimm 2017:

34). Political themes on the other hand were statistically exceptionally high coded negatives being usually discussed in opposition to Western democratic values (Thimm 2017: 34-35).

A repeated ambivalence can be seen regarding China in terms of admiration and rejection. This ambivalence is encapsulated in the perception of China as a threat or rival due to its political system on one hand and as a strategic partner on the other.

China is to date largely connected to its rapid economic development, which has lifted millions out of poverty and is a source of much admiration amongst states and is mainly cited as the reason for China's new place in the world order (Morrison 2018: 1). Other factors such as China's military power or its economic ties with pariah states become a source for international anxiety (Xing 2018: 32) (Blanchard & Lu 2012: 579). The restriction of free press does increase the mistrust, by creating a discourse of rumours rather than facts (D'Hooghe 2014: 63). The usage of hard power in internal situations such as the Hong Kong protests or the Tiananmen protests alienate a western audience and thus spur a general mistrust in the Chinese government (Shambaugh 2015: 107) (Holbig 2010). These incidents enjoy high media coverage, leading the Beijing consensus to be perceived as negatively, surrounded by controversies (Blanchard & Lu 2012: 570). This has led the Chinese government to try to separate China's politics from other spheres, such as its culture (Morrison 2018: 28-29?). This separation of the spheres is another source of anxiety for western states, where these spheres are highly interconnected.

Zhou Haixia hasanalysed the image of Chinese people in Germany in *Das Bild Chinas im deutschsprachigen Raum*, constructed through media articles between 2000 and 2010 and finds that the discourse surrounding Chinese people living in Germany is mainly connotated negatively (Haixia 2017:156). Haixia views the discourse connected to Chinese people in Germany as well as Chinese culture constructed through otherness as an outgroup (Haixia 2017:168). Remarkable here is that Haixia found this construction of otherness throughout all groups of Chinese people in Germany. The common view of otherness is explained through cultural habitus which alienates Chinese people to Germans from an Eurocentric point of view (Haixia 2017: 169). Compared to other European states, Haixia found that China's image in Germany often is more negative than in other western societies (Haixia 2017:169).

The negative perception of Chinese People and China is reflected in the image of Chinese Contemporary Artists. Christl Baur differentiates between four perceptions of Chinese Contemporary Artists in Germany in her paper *Die Zeitgenössische Chinesische Kunst und ihre*

Rezeption im Westen (Contemporary Chinese art and its reception in the west) Chinese Artists are depicted as dissidents, which is an image that has earned great sympathy in the western sphere (Baur 2014: 77). But Baur rightly points out that this perception of dissidents is an undifferentiated understanding of China and the West and does not enable space for the Chinese or international society to be understood as anything but (Baur 2014: 77). Secondly, Chinese artists have been perceived as exotics for a long time. The French curator Jean-Hubert Martin found a post-colonial perspectivism in European art, in which non-western artists are perceived as "Global exotics' before individual artists. CCA was thus never viewed as a l'art pour l'art as European art was. CCA was always marked under the label of China, which made it impossible to look at Chinese artists' work without prejudice based on the image of China, which meant that the perception of CCA was always highly influenced by political actions of China (Baur 2014: 76-77). Thirdly have Chinese artists in opposition to the second understanding been viewed as global but not Chinese artists. With the commercial and economic boom of the CCA, its reception did change as well, where the Chinese artists became a global phenomenon, and got introduced into the global art world. These artists were mostly exiled from China thus being seen as part of world culture (Baur 2014: 77). Lastly, Chinese Contemporary artists have been understood as a threat to the West (Baur 2014: 76). Through the CCA the disparity of values became evident, reminding the western audience of the rising power China is and viewing the Chinese artist as a threat to western values and morals (Baur 2014: 81).

5.0 Analysis

The following Chapter will cover the analysis of the German language media coverage of China's contemporary art through the four cases: Ai Weiwei (1), Die 8 der wege (The 8 of ways) (2), China 8 (3) and Chinese Whispers (4). Each case has a number assigned to them, which will inform the reader which Case is talked about when a quote is presented. The numbers behind the quotes refer to the appendix, where the original quote is presented alongside the translation.

The analysis will be built around two subchapters. The first is the *Normative Hegemony*, which aim is to explain how the reception of CCA is politicized through a constructed difference of the Chinese identity and the German identity through values and moral conduct. The first part aims to describe the establishment of a hegemony through a normative social order.

The second part is called *Art hegemony* and focuses on the Post-Mao Generations positive reception by the German media, while simultaneously restricting this perception to restricted ascribed identities. The second part therefore aims to describe the establishment of a hegemony though the power over the definition of art. It has to be noted, that the term hegemony is used loosely here and does relate to the establishment of unequal power relations but does not refer to active and cognitive aims of the media to establish such a hegemony.

5.1 Normative hegemony

This subchapter will cover the construction of the Chinese identity mediated through the receptions of the CCA exhibitions. China most commonly referred to in an undifferentiated negative way and I will in the following argue how this reception establishes an unequal power relationship

Throughout the coding has it become clear, that most of the Chinese identity established by the media portrays China negatively. According to Connolly's identity theory can this process be explained due to an othering process of China. Through this process becomes Chinas identity the inverted version of the German identity. This subchapter is called normative superiority because it is through normative standards of ethical conduct that the German identity is

indirectly and implicitly being constructed as the version distancing itself from the Chinese identity. It is thus telling how Chinas identity is constructed in these reviews to see where it is, that othering is taking place and thus where a difference in morality and values are perceived. This subchapter thus helps to answer the research question by exploring the ways in which othering is taking place by introducing a highly politicized identity of China to establish a lack of shared values between the western or German identity and the Chinese identity.

5.1.1 Chinas identity

The politization of China is established on multiple occasions throughout the dataset. This politization is not without reason, as the Mao-Generation established a name for themselves by identifying as rebills against the Chinese state, which connects the CCA to politics in its origins. But the departure from the CCA vs. State dichotomy has been discussed in the first subchapter and negative associations are still introduced into presumably non political Post-Mao artwork.

Some of the most frequent descriptions of China are for example as a regime, totalitarian or communist, which thus seem to become linked in the perception.

"The regime there (…)" (NZZ 1)

"Like in Putins Russia, was the reason to start totalitarian terror near at hand" (NZZ 1)

"But in communist China, different rules apply than in the west, when the topic is art" (NZZ 1)

The western perspective of China is clearly articulated critical, where totalitarianism and communism are two strains the western identity is distancing itself from and constructs an other to develop this dichotomy. And while totalitarian terror is one of the most explicit examples, does this description of the Chinese state as a reckless communist regime seem to be a common reception established. A concrete example of this perception is in the combination with the value of freedom.

"The only blemish: China is no free and no democratic country. People are being followed, because their thoughts differ from the communist party, because they are publicly criticizing

the regime (…) For sure, no ideal production-conditions for the artists: Because how free are

artists in a repressive regime? What kind of themes could they talk about? Which language

do they have to use to avoid going to jail or even to risk death penalty? Asked in reverse:

How subversive does a Chinese artist living in his home have to act to even be able to work?

" (kultur online 3)

The quote is very clear in its depiction of China. This quote leaves no room for negotiation as it straight forward describes the Chinese state as repressive. It just establishes itself as the dominant meaning by presenting this perspective as a fact from the beginning. The identity of China is here constructed through the assertion of what it is not. It is not free and not democratic. While the quote goes on questioning the artistic value of art produced under these conditions is it then freedom and democracy which become preconditions to the production of "true" art. This precondition for art then establishes the understanding of "true" art as bound to political forms of government. This connection between art and politics then de-legitimizes CCA if it is not positioned against this regime. It is here, that the regime critical art becomes the accepted art, because it distinctively departs from the understanding of art often valued in China, which is defined by its conceptual and technical excellence and expression. Instead art is understood as such through its expression of political freedom. Not just the value, but the right to call oneself an artist is here questioned when the artist is submissive. This presupposes an inherent political dimension to be considered an artists. The introduction of the Chinese political system into the discussion of art already establishes a connection between politics and art, where the Chinese state is situated in opposition to art, which means that true art as free art cannot be produced in allegiance with the Chinese state.

The huge success and celebration of Mao generation Artists throughout the 90s can consequently be viewed as celebrating a rejection from what is perceived as Chinese repression and thus a rejection of everything associated with China. Mao generation Artists then become the confirmation for the German audience in their construction of China as an other. Mao-Generation artists are positions in opposition to the Chinese states. In them being perceived as dissidents and rebels, are they do they become associated with the inverted values, which are democracy and freedom in this case.

This inclusion into the western discourse as a confirming role of the western value superiority can be one explanation for why no other Chinese art except of the traditional Chinese art has become successful in the west or why CCA in general has become such a success in the west

and not in China. Traditional Chinese culture is here to be viewed as an exception, because it is the representation of an old China, an ancient and sophisticated civilization which is not connected to the modern Chinese discourse, thus not its current politics.

> *"With public appeal did he address the painful subject which has become evident though Beijing's harsh reactions: Environmental destruction, the loss of traditions, corruption, censorship and perversion of justice. Ai Weiwei appeared on the international art scene (…) and promptly became the ambassador for a free China"* (kultur online 3)

Ai Weiwei has become a symbol of this political artist, when he is spoken of as the adversary of a free China. Ai Weiwei thus symbolizes everything China could be and what it is not. Kultur online describes what a lack of freedom and this political system is doing to China. A repressing country entails environmental destruction, the loss of its own traditions, corruption, censorship and the perversion of justice. This quote thus emphasizes the negative impact the Chinese state has on its country by its amoral conduct. It is here that the Chinese identity understood as unfree and the Chinese state understood as harsh is connected to other dominant discourses. It is noteworthy here that it is not established how the state form and the other values are connected. But they are represented as the consequences of the non-democratic state form and lack of freedom ascribed to China. Except for the perversion of justice, all of these discourses are introduced multiple times throughout the data, of which the loss of tradition and censorship will be touched upon in different parts of the analysis.

> *"Even though the urban conditions of life repeatedly get attention: The environmental problems of the city suffering through smog makes headlines because of these problems. But it is not the theme in the new exhibition. Is this a case of self-censorship?"* (Tagesspiegel).

By viewing China's political system as the source of the other, the western system and the values it stands for become the inverted versions. It can thus be expected that the values described are the ones a free society most commonly identifies with. The western identity as a free world is then characterized by valuing the protection of nature, the bond to its own traditions, by the lack of corruption, the freedom of speech and the rule of law. These values then become connected to democratic thought. Especially the protection of nature and the bond to own traditions have become essential values in a postmodern society, which is characterized by environmental destruction for the benefit of the economy and lost traditions through the increased individualism and acceleration of society, as described in several postmodern

theories. China is through this description therefore not just replicated as a symbol of a totalitarian regime for a western audience (or at least non democratic) but also as one, which seems to have a modernist mindset, rather than a postmodern. Postmodernism is viewed as the continuation of modernism, which means that the postmodernist mindset has to solve the resulting problems modernism has constructed. If China then is constructed as a modernist state, it is also perceived as a state which is reproducing these problems, thus making its actions problematic from a postmodern worldview.

China is thus constructed as the other to a democratic and free society and to a postmodern society on multiple levels (political, social and economically). This reception of China makes the construction of the other thus easy to be considered as a solidification of the western identity. Their dichotomy is furthermore exemplified by dismissing China in its totality when the Tagesspeigel states the west and China have no *shared set of values* (Tagesspeigel). This reduction of complexity might then easily turn China to be exaggerated as it was in the quote from kultur online in the beginning of this subchapter. Or lead to explicitly questioning Chinas intentions.

"A giant monstrosity lies in the middle of the exhibition room. «Te Tank Project» (2011– 2013) by He Xiangyu – the same artist, who constructed Ai Weiweis corpse- is a stitched together sculpture formed like a tank and made out of leather. It looks as if he is run out of air. Or is it a sleeping dragon which can awake at any moment and kill us?" (NZZ 4)

According to Connolly can othering and a radical reduction of complexity easily turn into a threat to democratic thought, which can be exemplified through some but not many constructions of China as a direct threat throughout the data. Otherness as a threat is here constructed by the questioning of the intentions of China as NNZ does or later on in that article by the construction of a historic narrative of China

"Uli Sigg and the Schindler-group are in 1979 trying to establish the first joint venture with a heavily Leninist-Maoist influenced and seemingly early industrial factory hall type of Chinese team (…) The Chinese have for a long time not accepted that a Swiss person's modest payment for professionals amounts to the same salary as for 120 Chinese workers. A swiss person who in the end has been send anyways films history, including many in the fabric halls hung adverts, which announce executions around the corner" (NZZ 4)

Although executions probably always will be condemned by the western audience, is it noticeable that in little stories like these, no explanation for the mentioned executions are given. The story then constructs such actions to some degree as arbitrarily constructing an identity of China that is responsible for these executions or who lets these things happen. Both versions paint China as a brutal country who's state mistreats its citizens and their rights or has been doing that in recent years.

The overall Chinese identity has been established, with clearly negative symbols connected to the Chinese identity, depicting the state as totalitarian, repressive regime with an outdated modernist mindset questionable intentions towards the west and violations of human rights. Othering is in this construction of Chinas identity clearly the dominant position, as it is used in multiple articles and is steadily reinforced by the messages sent through the CCA reviews.

5.1.2 Censorship

Since art exhibitions are a form of media, which in the west most frequently are connected to freedom, does it not come as a surprise that the most frequent discourse included in the reviews of the exhibitions are questions of censorship and free speech. Censorship and questions of free speech are two prominent topics concerning China's identity in Germany, thus inviting the questioning of these in exhibition reviews (see literature review). Censorship is a topic discussed across reviews of all the exhibitions exhibited in this paper. And although they don't agree on the problematic behind censorship and the impact it has on CCA, is it widely agreed upon that censorship is a problem connected to China and its government. Most frequently is the connection of political artists, especially Ai Weiwei, being discussed in regards to censorship.

> *„Over several years had Ai Weiwei criticised the state violence, its censorship and its historical construction* (…)*"* (Tagesspiegel 2)

Ai Weiwei has been outspoken of the government's censorship, while he himself is not discussed publicly in China (Die Presse 4). Also his assistant Zhao Zhao is being monitored and his art has been confiscated according to Tagesspiegel.

> *"One can also see the pieces of Zhao Zhao. He had worked as the assistant of Ai Weiwei and under the authorities special observation. In 2012 was his work, a sculpture made out of concrete – broken pieces of a policeman – confiscated just before its transport to New York"*. (Tagesspiegel 2)

As an anecdote, does the story of Zhao Zhao strike as the quintessential western image of China. It starts by establishing the connection between Ai Weiwei and Zhao Zhao, to let the reader connect Zhao Zhao with regime critical politics, which Ai Weiwei symbolizes (see political artist). Afterwards, we find out what kind of piece has been confiscated, namely a destroyed stature of a police officer. The irony has not been overlooked by the author of this article. A policeman is an official, which makes it likely that he represents the Chinese system or the police as part of an official structure. The fact that he is broken might then refer to a broken system, which could have been shattered by someone or is broken as in not functioning properly. Whatever it is, the article informs the reader in the same sentence of the piece being confiscated. The exemplification of censorship in this scene is then further reinforced by the author specifying when this occurred: Right before its transport to New York. This thus portrays the confiscation as an act, which has not been announced or discussed with the artist in advance, but happened last minute, therefore emphasizing the power the government has through the states freedom to use their power arbitrarily. The fact that this piece was supposed to be shipped to New York, the epicentre for western contemporary art then also establishes that it is not just the artist who has lost its piece and his message, but it is the reader as well.

This story is a concrete example of Chinese censorship as part of a wider discourse surrounding China's relationship to art. It is a sign of a fundamental mistrust of the western audience to China, which in parts of the data seems to be of more interest than the message the art is sending. It is frequently questioned if the western exhibitions have been censored, due to either Chinese officials interfering or German curators to serve the good relationship China and Germany have built. One example would be the widely quoted concerns vocalised by Gallerist (and claimed China-expert) Alexander Ochs.

> *"Smerling decisively rejects speculation about censorship. There were no specifications by the government. The custom authorities have – though after some discussion – allowed all the pieces through. Ochs does on the other hand say, that the problem does not lie in the custom authorities, but rather that the exports have to be politically approved by the Chinese authorities. In this sense Ochs views the role of the Chinese curator of China 8, Fan Di'an*

sceptical. Fan was until recently the director of the Chinese national museum in Beijing and is now president of the central academy of arts. One cannot talk about a "free curator ", says Ochs. (…) (Smerling) answers the question if Fan Di'an was a form of head supervisor: "That would be a totally wrong impression": Smerling emphasizes: "We are not going this exhibition as an order from either the Chinese nor the German state." Also Smerling knows the Chinese art scene from countless travels in decades prior. And he said: "Of course is the artist free in his atelier, but just in his atelier". (Süddeutsche Zeitung 3)

This long quote verbalises a variety of concerns and can be viewed as symbolic of the anxiety a western audience has when entering a Chinese exhibition. It starts by addressing the concern that the Chinese government might have censored the Chinese artists in a way, similar to Zhao Zhao. The uncertainty and implicit arbitrariness of the Chinese government lies here in inverted sentence: *though after some discussion*, which implies, that not everything went as freely as it should have and is not subject to law, since one can talk himself out of this situation. Censorship from the government is though not confirmed with this sentence, but possible bribes and a weak rule of law is. Looking further to Ochs explanation, the implication is made that it is not the officials who are censoring art, but the institution in which art is produced. The Chinese curator is here constructed as a tool for the censoring mechanism the Chinese government is enacting, by exemplifying the ties the curator Fan Di'an has to the official art institutions of China. The real censorship is then outsourced from its official ties symbolically represented by "the politic " (the government) and the customs authority (government officials) to then become institutionalized. But even though Smerling is rejecting this view, does he give in to the Ochs accusations of censorship in China by rejecting the thought of freedom in China outside of the artists atelier. This could be interpreted differently, but in contrast to Ochs rejection of a free curator and the overall theme of censorship discussed in the article, does the word freedom here instinctively connotate to freedom in China in general. Leaving the reader with the impression that free speech and expression is not a given in China, but that art is free, in its thought and production.

In the specific case of censorship is the Chinese state again constructed as the other, similarly to the identity of China in general. But the difference lies now in the framing of the story. The story of Zhao Zhao is almost framed from the perspective of the artist, where the destruction of the art is at the centre of the story, leaving the reader emphatic to the artist. In connection to the quote by Süddeutsche Zeitung do both quotes send a delegitimizing message regarding

CCA. The first construction of the Chinese states identity as repressing the production of art of worth through its limitation on freedom questioned the production of art in China, thus delegitimizing Chinese art exhibitions. The case of censorship is not questioning the existence of "real" art (according to the western understanding) in China but views the censorship as prohibiting "real" art to be exported. Both cases then construct the Chinse state as an other with the difference that one perspective views no Chinese art to be "real" art while the other does acknowledge the existence of such. What they both have in common trough is the construction of the Chinese state in constant relation to the CCA, making every Chinese exhibition easily de-legitimized.

Similar constructions of China's censorship can be found regarding the other exhibitions, with all curators rejecting this claim.

> *"The 20 year anniversary of the partner city initiative between Berlin and Beijing is the occasion (…) But official bodies would not have influenced the selection, as the curators assure.: They can show all the exhibits they want"* (+Kunst)

The last sentence exemplifies how deeply rooted the connection of China and censorship really is. While none of the curators have given any cause of concern, this claim has appeared in all three exhibitions (Excluding Ai Weiwei, although he has voiced allegations of censorship against the Chinese government). These allegations almost go beyond stereotypical depiction and voice the expectation that art from China is necessarily censored.

But not all the reviews are as critical as those discussed already when it comes to China's censorship behaviour. A range of articles has highlighted how China as it stands today is much more free than the western audience expects. Andreas Schmid therefore is being quoted:

> *"Although censorship exists, there are much more possibilities in art, than we think in the west."* (Tip berlin 2)

> *"But the freedom of the artists to find and implement themes is much bigger than generally expected (…)"* (Von hundert 2)

The quoted article later takes the time to exhibit how this freedom includes a range of themes which have been connected to Chinese censorship. These themes were China's history, state violence and sexuality, attested by the names of artists which have been shown their art in the

west. Von Hundert then reminds the reader that freedom and thus a step back from censorship has increasingly been established in China. But although these themes have been touched upon, especially in relation to Post-Mao-generation artists, do they still represent the oppositional meaning. Censorship is a constituting dominant discourse which is directly affecting the view on CCA and is reinforced through the constant introduction of this discourse into the reviews and articles. The oppositional meaning is scarce compared to the censorship discourse. But nonetheless can the involvement of this oppositional discourse be viewed as a step into a revision of the dominant meaning regarding censorship.

5.1.3 The cultural unknown

Next to the dominant meaning established through a negative image of China can a negotiated meaning regarding this politicized negative identity be identified as well. The negotiated meaning is according to Hall a reception which accepts the dominant positions a decoded message entails but revises some aspects of the message to fit into the situated worldview of the decoding person. The negotiated meaning can be spotted in a range of articles and is probably most evident when it serves as the explanation for the negative Chinese identity constructed. Chinese culture is here constructed as different from the German culture rather than it is actively othering.

The following long quote from Tagesspiegel is a perfect start into the following subchapter as it directly addresses concern regarding cultural communication problems.

„The curator of the exhibition „Momentum“, Chang Tsong Zung explained that terms like “Revolution” or the other are rooted in western Christian utopic traditions of thought. The Chinese word for “Revolution”, which Mao used was traditionally used as a form of synchronization of political realities with the provisions of a heavenly order. First through these adaptations of terms was he able to modernize China radically from within. Likewise the term freedom. What does it mean for an artist in Beijing to talk about freedom (Yóu Lí)? The sign „Yóu " means journey or tours, while “Li” stands for “from us” and yet unmistakable reminiscences “ecstasy” and “elation”?

*So what does it mean, when an avowed transsexual artist is tearing apart the text of
an American art critic, because he wants to position her as a political artist? Most
artists of a younger generation in Beijing think alike when it comes to the ascribed
role of a political artist from outside. Discussed are artistic methods, kind and ways to
see and do things different -thus alternative ways of being"* (Tagesspiegel 2)

What is emphasized throughout the first half of the quote is the inherent perspectivism when
the reader is confronted with transcultural media. By deconstructing language through words
like freedom or revolution does the author showcase how cultural understanding is connected
to the understanding of history. One example is the connection of a word to its connotation
with communism (by referring to Mao) and Confucianism (by referring to the heavenly order).
Another example of perspectivism follows, as the meaning of the signs constructing the
Chinese word freedom are revealed, thus underlining the difference of literate meaning from
its German equivalent. The explanation of the historic connotation and literate meaning, the
words freedom and revolution have in Chinese then underpin for the reader the difference
between China's and Germanys cultural background and thus their interpretation of symbols.
The reader therefore finds himself/herself confronted with uncertainty when interpreting the
art of Chinese artists. Tagesspiegel therefore acknowledges the cultural gap between the
western and Chinese lifeworld by looking closer at the different cultural bases of our
understanding of specific words, which often are taken for granted and assumed rather than
defined and critically questioned.

The question Tagesspeigel then goes on to ask is how to understand certain acts of an artist.
The implicit question though seems to be what we view Chinese artists as, based on this lack
of cultural knowledge. And Tagesspiegel is delivering an answer. The artist is a political artist.

The word *ascribed* is here of essential meaning, because it does imply, that the Beijing artists
do not see themselves as political artists. This trope of the Chinese artist as a political one is
implied to be the most common one, if not the only one, when Tagesspiegel goes on to write
that these artists are looking for alternative models of being. The artist is here not constructed
in his or her role as political or Chinese but is merely based on being Chinese assumed to be
political. This ascription is based on a western need to solidify his identity rather than the artist's
own description. That the actual artist behind the trope is forgotten does the last paragraph

finalise, when the author of the review challenges us to look behind the ascribed role and common discourses to find the artist as an individual. The review ends with the author inviting the reader to look past the trope.

A second example shows a different construction of the cultural gap between China and the West

> *"The person who is traveling to Shanghai or Beijing for the first time does quickly feel struck down. Forests of skyscrapers let the recollection of Manhattan's skyline pale. Everything appears gigantic, also the crowds of people moving in the urban canyon – perplexingly hyper modern and western. Who stays a bit longer will though ascertain that the urban major city fassade is just a facete of China and that the people in the sparkling new «Hardware» occasionally behave totally different than the western «Software» would expect them to do."* (NZZ 4)

This is a quote from the Zurich Newspaper NZZ, which is encapsulating a western view on China poignantly. The author starts with a description of the skyline of Chinese metropoles connecting it to the perspective of an outsider by pointing out the view of someone who has never visited China before. The outsider does easily feel like he has been "struck down" (a German phrase for being overwhelmed) by a skyline which outshines Manhattan, the epiphany of a modern western skyline and metropoles. The author won't hesitate to explain to us why the imaginative protagonist feels this way. It is "huge"/ "gigantic" in its buildings and the amount of people inhabiting those. But what else makes one feel so overwhelmed? The surprise to find Chinese metropoles to be hyper modern and western. This surprise is encapsulated through the word *perplexingly*. Perplexed does here refer to an understanding of China (through the eyes of a western protagonist). The perplexing aspect stems from the variance between the expectations the protagonist had of China and the reality he sees before him. Since the protagonist is a westerner and the article is written for an western audience, does this article assume that the western identity of China is different from hyper modern cities and western societies. This choice of words can even be interpreted further. When thinking about the surprise behind China's metropoles being western and hypermodern a connection between those two arises. Westernism is then characterized by hyper modernism and vice versa.

Constructing an understanding of hypermodernity as western, will consequently make what is not, non-western.

And indeed, the tourist, who would now have to adapt the impression he had of China through hear-saying, dismantles this adaption of the protagonists (and maybe the readers) lifeworld. Because the person who'll stay for longer will find out that the metropolitan vibe is merely one part of what China is and represents.

The description of a "shiny and new hardware" does here probably relate to the rapid (urban) transformation China has undergone over the last decades. The word shiny does ring a bell to German saying such as: not everything that shines is gold, expressing the negative effects of the allure of facades, which resonates with the word "Big city fassade" used before. And this big city facade, which, as we have established before, is a symbol for hypermodernity and "westerness" might therefore be interpreted as a facade behind which the "true" China lies. The direct opposition is constructed in the words "Hardware" and behaviour describing China, in opposition to the western "Software" and expectation.

All in all, is the quote constructing China as a country, which might look western, but is at its core fundamentally different, exemplified through the wording *behave totally different*. This presumed conduct is never specified, but lets the reader get an image of Chinese people as foreign and different from western, even though they may seem similar. Difference is then established rather than othering. The software/hardware dichotomy is reducing the Chinese complexity to make China seem as the other but the quote also acknowledges the layers which lie behind the "western facade". This acknowledgement makes the Chinese identity more a negotiated meaning. While the dominant meaning through othering is established through the dichotomic difference and the assurance of the fundamental difference between the two cultures, leaves the acknowledgement of other shades behind the western facade the possibility for other opinions in the decoding process.

"To the west does China however still seem Greek" (Berner zeitung 4)

"With all the cultural distance, one does admittedly meet acquainted topics here. The implementation of the creative language however is not always easy to decipher." (Von Hundert 2)

The quote of Von Hundert creates a cultural difference between the west and China which, as the first quote of Tagesspiegel did, is used as the explanation for a clouded understanding of each other's behaviour. The quote does though in opposition to the quote by NZZ also construct a connection between China and the west. Von Hundert expresses the similarity of the themes which concerns both societies, despite their cultural difference and which consequently are not constructed as inherently different. It is the way in which these themes are culturally coded and decoded, which is depicted as the source of confusion. This quote can thus even be viewed as part of the oppositional meaning, when similarities in the message lie at the core of cultural difference. It is then a lack of cultural understanding which prohibits a western audience to understand and comprehend a coded message from a Chinese messenger. Thimm already revealed in the literature review that the media coverage of China in general is focused on economic and political topics. The soft power index furthermore writes about China's soft power to a large degree is relying on its traditional cultural heritage (China-Soft Power 2019). With rapid social transformation, is the cultural understanding of China then limited and leads to misunderstanding and confusion. It is then this cultural understanding behind Chinese actions, which is not often explained, thus having to be assumed. It is as NZZ writes:

„*China is a country in transformation: Economics, Politics, but also Art and Culture are developing, even though especially the latter is perceived less in Europe.*"

(Duisburg am Rhein 3)

Modern culture is not one of the main topics connected to China's image. It is therefore not surprising that the imaginative person of the NZZ article is surprised by the seeming cosmopolitical image of the Beijing or Shanghai skyline. He does see China through a cultural understanding of a western perspective, which is first and foremost of a political China, an economic China or a traditional China, but not a modern cultural China. This lack of cultural understanding of China leads to an interpretation of China's/ Chinese action based on stereotypes. The media would then continue to reinforce an image of China as foreign and "totally different" and not understood from its western counterpart, instead of constructing a

differentiated cultural identity. A lack of interest in the cultural development of China can in combination with the othering of China through its political actions be interpreted as a lack of willingness to give up the dominant social meaning of China as the other. The Bund gives one explanation for this phenomenon

> *„The exhibition (…) does if nothing else wants to contribute to the closer examination of the perception of China – of a gigantic country, which admittedly is coming closer as a global economic power, but has remained foreign because of big cultural and historic differences."* (Der bund 4)

The perception of China not just as an other but also as a threat offers a possible explanation to this problem. The political rejection of the Chinese system and the states action overall is othered through the Chinese identity being perceived as lacking morally good values. Good values are bound to democratic values especially freedom in the German reception, which has been exemplified earlier in the analysis. In combination with the rise of China as a new power, here described as a giant country and global economic power, does this lead to an anxiety which especially challenges the values shared by the German audience. A differentiation of the Chinese identity away from othering would then include the Chinese values into the discourse, possibly challenging the German values. A total lack of this inclusion, what Connolly also called agonistic respect, is a sign that both the dominant meaning conveyed through othering of China and the negotiated meaning conveyed through a lack of interest in Chinese contemporary culture are related through their upholding of the western value hegemony. Both are characterized by the upholding of a Chinese value system amoral and fundamentally different from the German perception. It does therefore not seem necessary to develop a cultural understanding of China, as the culture is conveying the "wrong" values. It has become clear, how the Chinese identity has predominately been constructed through Chinas political actions and state system. The values conveyed were

But since most reviews seem to convey a message which reinforces the negative identity of China by discussing questions of politics, instead of including the messages Chinese actors want to convey (such as the social transformation process) does it seem likely that CCA reviews are already politicized by excluding Chinese voices or messages outside of clear political statements.

„Life in China does unfold much more in crowds and the family than it does in the west and is shaped in for us foreign ways of thinking (…) All of this is just comprehensible in the context of the incredibly rapid transformation which China has undergone in the last 4 decades." (NZZ 4)

As NZZ notes, is it especially important to become able to contextualize Chinese action, which means that the western reader needs to be informed about China's social and cultural transformation just as much as the political and economic transformation.

Without the cultural understanding to decode Chinese messages properly, a western audience will not become able to look past the depiction of China as an other and therefore wont overcome stereotypes. This does at least seem to be the belief of Uli Sigg, which endless times has been quoted on his highly symbolic title of the exhibition: Chinese whispers.

„(…) No surprise if you name the game, which is called "Stille post" (Silent mail) in an English speaking country. It is called Chinese Whispers. A message is being whispered from one participant to the next, and one is surprised at what is left in the end – little and often the wrong thing. The curator Kathleen Bühler explains at the tour for the press, that the title is a wonderful metaphor for our relationship to China." (Berner Zeitung 4)

The name Chinese whispers as a symbol for the relationship between the west and China is underscoring the challenges of intercultural communication and the lack of knowledge regarding China's contemporary culture.

5.1.3 CCA: An industry

It is noticeable, that CCA is not connected to economics to the same degree, than it is to politics. But although the linkage of economics and the CCA is slight should this link be

explored, since it is used to construct a certain narrative of China and to criticize CCA as being too market orientated.

Most notably is the economic development of China depicted in its socio economic consequences in China.

> *"But the freedom of the artists to find and implement themes is much bigger than generally expected (…)"* (Von hundert 2)

> *„For the artist, that's his expression of contemporary China: Luck, beauty and prosperity exists, but no safety (…) Against the background of China's rapid social and economic transformation, inequality is experienced more intensively."* (Der Bund 4)

> *"The income gap is bigger than it is in the western industry states: (…) For the superrich are expensive art pieces' status symbols, just like mansions, luxury cars and brand products: the more expensive the better.*" (kunst+ 3)

> *"(…) that a lot of people are thirsting for consumer gods and status symbols.*" (NZZ 4)

Economic inequality is expressed multiple times throughout different articles, where the Chinese person is depicted as eager to express wealth in status symbols. The Chinese person is thus depicted as superficial and driven by the value the market economy pins on something rather. Art does in this constellation lose every other function, then serving as a symbol of wealth.

The inequality and distribution of wealth is described in opposition to western states, and described as experienced more intensively. That China has beauty, luck and prosperity is put into opposition to safety. Instinctively raising the question in the reader's head, if this is worth it?

"In the 1980s did artists not have the prospect to earn money with their work and first later oriented themselves towards the market, Eller states. The contemporary generation is in contrast purely market orientated: They have to start out producing catchy, easy to sell products to earn a reputation (…)" (+kunst 2)

"The competition is huge: ten thousands graduate every year from the art academies. In the enormous amount: According to plan I Culture is supposed to become a Chinese pillar industry by 2015 and generate five percent of the GDP. But the art production in a turbo- state- capitalism does not just produce serial production" *(+kunst 2)*

"Everything could be the topic in this 1,4 billion state capitalist society, says Sigg" *(Der bund 4)*

The economic potential in CCA as an industry is described extensively by the magazine +kunst. The industry is described as lucrative for both artists and China's GDP. There is therefore no reference to any obstacle of the Chinese government towards CCA as it is connected to when talking about the political considerations of art. The economic quotes show us that China has developed a market for CCA, which young artists and new generations orientate themselves towards and feel supported by the system. This development is in opposition to the 80s, where Chinese artists had no chance to make a living of their art and felt repression rather than support. Important here is that although this connection to the economy is established, almost no article questions the value of Chinese contemporary artists' work, as the literature review would have suggested. In contrast, the industrialization of the CCA is not scrutinized to critique. Its messages are described as interesting rather than mass produced. This does though not mean, that art and the market are fully separated in the discourse. It is especially in the exhibition of China 8, that the critique of production of art as merely for the market is connecting these discourses; Art and economics.

5.2 Art Hegemony

I would like to start this part by describing the Mao and the Post-Mao generation. This subchapter aims to understand the reception of the Post-Mao Generation as it is perceived as the symbol of oppositional meaning and most differentiated social group in the analysis. This means that the subchapter aims to determine the perception of the Post-Mao Generation to become able to see how this position is contrasted to the dominant position, the othering of the Chinese identity. This chapter is called art hegemony, as it furthermore looks at the ways in which the western reception restricts the role of Post-Moa artists and thus establishes unequal power relations.

5.2.1 The Mao-Generation

The Mao generation refers in this study to the artists who were born before 1976, the year Mao Zedong died and are characterized by the reviews in much alliance with the historic overview.

"The exhibited contemporary art from the 80s and 90s has caught up to missed western art trends; it was politically shaped, where the involvement of Mao and the worship of the cultural revolution were a focal point. The godlike "big chairman" has to be looked out for today." (Der Bund)

The Mao generation is thus tightly connected to its historical and socio-political arena, where its political message cut out this group to become the international symbol of rebellion against the Chinese state and the art thematizing the effects of the cultural revolution became an influential message which shaped the German views on a communist China. China is here opposition to the artists, constructed as the repressor while the artist became the rebel, the audience sympathized and identified with.

"Until the end of the 1980s was the official a production limited to propaganda and decoration: independent art did not exist apart from the private apartments of dissident-circles." (kunst+ 3)

This narrative then unfolds as the CCA is almost romanticized into the quintessential underdog story of success, which built the foundation for the generation to come.

"In just two decades has the Chinese cultural institution managed to moult itself from a niche event in the private apartments of intellectuals to become one of the biggest art markets in the world. The work of contemporary painters is sold for double digit millions." (kunst+)

The Mao generation artist was made out to be a dissident and their art expected to be regime critical. Their success seems almost to have been tied to their limited role as rebels, dissidents and regime critics, best embodied by Ai Weiwei, who is spoken of as an activist as much as an artist. There is therefore an undeniable interest in the establishment of the Chinese political discourse surrounding CCA, which will be explored further in the subchapter: Value Hegemony.

5.2.2 The Post-Mao Generation

This subchapter will explore the reception of the Post-Mao Generation viewed as an example of the oppositional meaning. The establishment of the dominant meaning, creating China as the other and the negotiated meaning of viewing cultural difference as an explanation for othering leaves according to Halls theory the oppositional meaning. I would argue that the Post-Mao Generation is embodying the oppositional meaning, as they are the most differentiated representatives (of object and subject) in this situation.

The Post-Mao Generation are the artists, which have not experienced the cultural revolution and therefore grew up in a severely different China due to the countries rapid transformation.

> *They didn't experience the cultural revolution themselves, (…)"* (Der Bund 4)

The modern Chinese artist therefore grew up in a society, which is globalized and cosmopolitical.

> *,,(...) Mostly, they are already working globally and live in metropoles, they have often studied and worked aboard, (almost) all of them can travel without restrictions and use the internet."* (Der Bund 4)

Their predecessors focused seemingly solely on political criticism of China, which leads them to become associated with the dominant meaning. The Post-Mao Generation is though perceived as fundamentally different from the one of the Artist of the Mao-Generation. Post-Mao Artists have a cosmopolitical identity, which makes them aware of cultural differences of west and east and thus equip them in processing the experiences of this identity in their art. The Mao-Generation artist is often denied his Chinese persona to be perceived as a global artist or a dissident, as we have seen Minglu write in the literature review. A similar strategy has been

detected for post-Mao generation artists, but this connotation of global is constructed in a different way. The following quotes show that modern Chinese artists are depicted as equipping both western and Chinese culture, thus being allowed their Chinese-ness and western experiences to coexist.

> *„In the Uferhallen are 23 young Beijing based artists introduced, who are confidently juggling with the east and the west* (+kunst 2)

This difference in perspective between these two generations is one of the main reasons why Post-Mao Chinese art is not preoccupied with the political aspect of China but do rather reflect the social aspects of the China, they grew up in, characterized by fast shifts of a Chinese society in midst of ideological, economic and social change as well.

> *"The global art market and the international network are taken for granted by them* (Young Chinese artists)*, their work reflects the conditions and the impositions of a life, seen from the perspective of a "Turbo-capitalistic" society, which communist superstructure seems to become increasingly surreal and therefore is planned to be replaced by the diffuse «Chinese dream»"* (Der bund 4)

This quote exemplifies how the next generation of Chinese artists is approaching a capitalist society more than it remains purely socialist/communist. The Chinese dream can here be viewed as the fusion of these through history opposing ideologies. The Chinese dream, as a symbol of China's future is described as diffuse, which might hint to the constant negotiation of what China wants to be and needs to encapsulate to ensure prosperity and harmony. A negotiation necessary for every society to change. And this continuous negotiation and social change is the society in which the modern Chinese artist is growing up. Social change does always also mean a reconfiguration of possibilities, which the Post-Mao Artist then exemplifies through his/ her freedom and diversity.

All in all can a positive characterization of Chinese artists be viewed. The oppositional meaning is here reviled through the dissolvement of the othering. It is in relation to the Post-Mao Generation that China is connected to capitalism as well as communism, and it is here that artists identity as both western and Chinese are discussed. The discussion of Post-Mao Artists is thus becoming a discussion of difference rather than othering. Furthermore do we have to discuss the integration of the Post-Mao Artist into the western value system. That the

generation is appreciated is symbolically transmitted by one of the core characteristics of this generation being its freedom.

> "*The freedom, which the young generation of artists takes, can also be seen in their choice in means of expression; the artists are refusing to commit to a distinctive signature in the sense of a formal recognition.*" (Von hundert 2) (20)

> "*We have met artists of a generation, which has not just worked out new possibilities, and also new freedom and which have shown us a until date unfamiliar China.*" (Art in Berlin 2) (22)

> *"Next to their love of experimentation is also an openness towards different cultures evident, which do not exist the other way around"* (Von hundert 2) (23)

These quotes do all exemplify the positive outlook through which a new generation of artists is constructed. Post-Mao Artists are described as open minded, opinionated, critical, intelligent and full of possibilities. The Post-Mao Chinese artist does thereby become an opposition to the Mao-Generation artists, who felt trapped by the restrictions of the government, exemplified through Ai Weiwei. Post-Mao Chinese Artists are not continuing this tradition, but are described as actively working towards building themselves new possibilities. The last two quotes do especially exemplify this understanding of Post-Mao Artists, by describing their openness towards other cultures and hinting to the lack of such a curiosity in the western culture. But a differentiation towards the west does still have to be established, though constructed differently from the Mao-Generation. The article of Kunst+ regarding the 8 of Roads exemplifies this process.

> *„Such diverse work would no western artist contribute to an exhibition, who values recognition".* (+kunst 2) (25)

These 23 artists have catched up to their western colleges for quite a while, without revitalizing them. They are confidently juggling parts of all directions; something no one in this country can do. (+kunst 2) (26).

The Post-Mao Generation identity constructed is generally connotated positively. As the oppositional meaning does it stand in sharp contrast to the othering of China and the Chinese state. The new generation also departs from distancing themselves to the Chinese state and are instead part of the Chinese cultural export marked. Methodological experimentation distances the Post-Mao Artist from his western counterparts and thematic diversity distances the Post-Mao artist from his political Chinese artist counterpart. The Post-Mao Generations has thus established an identity which is distinctly differentiated to the other positions in the CCA realm.

5.2.3 Post-Mao CCA Goals

But nonetheless is the Post-Mao Generation as the embodiment of the oppositional meaning still reduced in its differentiation.

It seems generally that the Post-Mao CCA is drawing inspiration from a range of different discourses in which it exists. The main three discourses connected to the Post-Mao CCA are the traditional Chinese art as an important part of their reception as Chinese, the western modern art discourse, as a concept of modernity and global openness to methodological diversity and the shadow of the original Mao-Generation of the CCA, which rebellion laid the foundation for the CCA to day. It is in this arena that the modern Chinese artist has to find his voice.

The artist has therefore to become able to reconfigure or live outside of them. These discourses cannot merely be viewed as inhibiting and are used by the CCA for their advantage. Political art still exists amongst the Post-Mao generation work, and likewise is western modern art still a source of inspiration for Post-Mao artists, although much more marginalized. That doesn't mean that the specific connection between these discourses is not inhibiting, in that it reduces these artists to be regime critical, copying western art or being bound to the western understanding of Chinese art. Through the western reception, the Post-Mao Generation of

contemporary artists is therefore mainly functioning as a representation for these understandings of art, making out their identity in the limits of these discourses. The Post-Mao artists therefore attempt to deconstruct and de-symbolize their art on the one hand

"The Chinese artist intends to "desymbolize" through his paintings"

And to celebrate their individualism over stereotypical representation on the other.

"Also this taken for granted, celebrated individualism seems to represent China's new generation of artists."

The identity of the Post-Mao Generation is one of a hybrid, which is representing Western values, such as freedom and individuality while simultaneously upholding a Chinese identity.

But that they are working through it in individual ways, by adapting and reshaping pre-existing discourses.

"The unusual in the artistic production of Beijing today is the astonishing range of experimentation. These artists show a variety of solutions, which a western concept of authorship couldn't comprehend and which is suggesting different forms of dealing with realities" (BMW Group 2).

It is therefore not surprising to see that political messages are to a much higher degree influenced by global political and advertising universal ethics and values, rather than focusing solely on Chinese politics.

5.2.4 Traditional China

So what exactly does make out this new generation of artists? Are they influenced in their reception through the rapid transformation China has undergone? China is first and foremost known for their traditional paintings and techniques, which has become a dominant characteristic for Chinese art. The Contemporary Chinese Artist is characterized by their methodological variety and experimental approach in their works.

"In general is this discussion of suitable artistic methods a big theme of contemporary art in Beijing, what both curators stress. Almost no artist sees himself/herself as a sculptor or a video artist per se. Many are looking for, suitable medium according to the subject." (Tip berlin 2)

The question of methods is bound to the question of heritage, where traditional Chinese art often is associated with specific techniques and constellations. CCA then finds itself in the middle of these two different worldviews where their Chinese identity is perceived through the traditional Chinese identity.

"The continuation of China ink paintings in the present age in the art museum Gelsenkirchen and the current painting. It starts with the drop shaped schlieren made out of black porcelain which are dripping down the wall over two floors like tears or dissolved Chinese characters. And it doesn't stop with calligraphic overwritten nudes." (

The departure from this understanding of Chinese art in new or mixed methods can thus lead to the denial of the Chinese identity, or at least the authentic Chinese identity. But even though a wider variety of diversity and praise has been granted the Post-Mao Generation, does the critique of this generation acknowledge the sore points of the western reception.

The range of experimentation and methodological diversity is one of the many praises the Post-Mao generation has become known for. It is a rapid departure from the methodical specific traditional approach to art, which is commonly considered characteristic for Chinese art. Its

departure is thus used to strip the CCA from its Chinese character, where the old China is being connected to authenticity, conversely making modern Chinese art not.

"(…) who is looking for these authentic elements of the old China (…) will be disappointed."

"The selection of artists is untrusting eyed upon by China experts. "I do not think that there are momentarily 120 qualitative good artistic positions in China, which are really worth to be seen", says the former Berlin gallerist Alexander Ochs, who has been active for over 20 years in the German-Chinese art exchange. Furthermore have artists been invited, who have been living in Germany for a long time. Artists who are "making trouble" have not even been invited." (süddeutsche zeitung 3) (66)

The Chinese heritage is thus to be understood in relation to the Chinese embrace of heritage and the amount of time they have lived abroad. A Chinese identity is symbolically bound to traditional Chinese characteristics in art, such as the topic of landscapes, calligraphy or watercolours do therefore restrict the Chinese artists from being received as such.

5.2.5 Chinese and Western art

A strict distinction between Chinese art and western art is furthermore established, when western art is defined through specific colours, composition or methods and where a combination of western and Chinese style or inspiration of the "western style" is harshly criticized.

"Colour-variation or cold realistic exploration of room seems like variations of western patterns"(Der Westen 3)

"Both Zhengs and Zhangs Duisburger Painting seem to be not particularly innovative. Eye to eye with the international discourse are none of these pieces. Especially tragic is the reference or inspiration to the west at the immaterial work of the painters. The expressive paintings by Zhang Fangbai for example seem like a cheap copy of informal art." (Die Welt 1)

"The artist pursues the question of how individuals in a society, which is marked by totalitarianism, is able to hold on to their individuality. (...) Why is the artist not developing her own language?" (Hoffmans 2017) (3)

It is especially … quote, that points out the severity of this problematic. While the political topic of the artist is being discussed for a sentence, the author refuses to go into the topic or its execution further and instead focuses on the work as a bad copy of western art. The rejection of the merger of western influence and traditional Chinese heritage here has two sources. Firstly can this rejection of the Western audience stem from the construction of an other. The western culture and the traditional Chinese culture, which the western audience has been exposed to much more frequently than the contemporary culture, are distinctly different. The merger of these two by Chinese artists withdraw a source of pride away from the western audience, as a formerly distinct and exclusive source of identity. Secondly does this merger also blur the neat understanding of Chinese art as traditional consequently making the understanding of China's identity and the own identity more shaky, as the western art dictate has been a source of pride.

The style pluralism, otherwise viewed as a source of individuality and freedom, might therefore also be viewed as neutral or negative.

"The confusing style-pluralism of their art scene (...)" (Heilwagen 2017) (2)

5.2.6 Stereotypes

German Diplomat Michael Clauss is quoted in the article of Tagesspiegel where he highlights the stereotypical identity Chinese and the West have of each other.

> *"(…) that we have "a picture of each other, which partly still is characterized through stereotypes and poor knowledge of the development of the respective country. We do therefore have to intensify the exchange to break down ignorance and reservation. These efforts are worth it. Because China is our companion and close partner in the global world."* (Tagesspiegel 2)

The struggle to overwrite a persisting (stereotypical) perception is acknowledged in this quote where Clauss believes that the source of a stereotypical perception lies behind the little interest of the development paths the other country has pursued. Exchange is according to him the obvious solution to gain a sincere understanding for each other. This decision is underscored logically, acknowledging the close ties China and Germany have, therefore framing cultural exchange as mutually beneficial.

It is therefore not enough to only view Chinese art as political or rather said regime critical (as it was established earlier in the analysis), because the regime critical art is based on an understanding of the Chinese political system as a "threat". Therefore Thomas Eller, curator of The 8 of Roads encapsulates the problem of decoding all art as regime critical:

> *"In this respect the question of critical art is short sighted. Particularly as it shows expectations, which had become a cliché a long time ago, gives Thomas Eller to consider: "You are allowed to say and show everything you want - we support that -, but please do it in a way which we can appreciate as critical""* (+kunst 2)

Eller comments here on the western viewers' narrow perception of CCA as political. He sees how the German construction of China's government as a threat has taken on a life of its own, leaving no place for other positions and perspectives on Chinese politics.

The cultural gap between China and the west, as well as the classification of Chinese artists as regime critical, does therefore need different approaches, who allow the viewer to gain deeper insight into the Chinese culture. A comparison of Ulli Siggs exhibition Chinese whispers (2016) and its predecessor Mahjong (2005) does show the difference.

> *"«Mahjong» shows us an overview of the art production of a country in boom.*
> *«Chinese Whispers» is less wide-ranging but conveys a deeper understanding"*
> (Berner zeitung 4)

> *"Instead of an overview (…) are through big fields of themes (…) evident and*
> *realization encouraging cuts beaten into the collection"* (Der bund 4)

The focus of new exhibitions has therefore shifted from an overview of what CCA is, to case studies, which shall help the recipient to understand the art in question and thus to rewrite the narrow cultural understanding of China. When we start to look at Chinese contemporary artists as humans constructed of more than one part of their identity and see China as more than its political regime, it suddenly becomes clear, how CCA addresses more than mere politics and might become able to capture a more holistic and nuanced depiction of the transformation this country undergoes.

> *„China is changing: The artists experiences are reflected in their work"* (Die Welt 3)

The negative and narrow perspective on China and its artists is also acknowledged by Von Hundert, who offers an optimistic spin on this lack of cultural understanding.

> *"Because it shows not just the generation after Ai, it is also steering the perception*
> *towards the diversity of themes, their closeness to life and the term freedom, which is*

totally different that it was, when used by art critics over the last years. A "neural" reception is therefore unlikely, at least based on the individual's image of China. Nevertheless does the exhibition open up for a closer look which can centre around the perception of art, as an art which can ask questions and leaves them unanswered, also of the societal function art serves and the role of the artist. The cultural distance to China might even be helpful" (Von Hundert 2)

What is important in this quote is to notice that Von Hundert and The 8 of Ways focuses on a young generation of Chinese Artists, explicitly the generation after Ai Weiwei. And his quote encourages us to look at the changes art and the artists have undergone. CCA exhibitions then become a step to depict in depth character studies of China, to belie its predominant stereotypes. An example of this is the word freedom, which does not mean the same thing as it did a couple of years ago. What then makes the exhibition quoted worthwhile is its ability to have a second look at our perception of CCA. The purpose of the Art is therefore, as it was in the Uli Siggs exhibition as well, not to give a neutral overview of what CCA is and to give final answers and perspectives. The purpose has shifted towards a curious approach, which enables the reader to question rigid stereotypes of China and Chinese artists and to build a more nuanced image of China and its development. But although these shifts in aim and agenda are conveyed through the reviews and articles, are these topics merely touched upon, to leave room for the political discussion. It is striking how little Chinese members of the art production have been given a voice, which leaves the receptions and the conveyed meaning of what CCA and China is be based on an inherent western perspective.

The subchapter has shown how a new era of CCA is emerging, with artists, who have been praised as innovative, intelligent and important for their field. The positive perception of China's Post-Mao Contemporary Artists could still be interpreted as a signal for change in the politicized perception of CCA. To build a new source for Chinese art, which is not relying on the depiction of CCA as a form of protest against the Chinese government (see value hegemony) can be a big step towards diversifying the otherwise stereotypical perception of China in Germany. There have tough also been acknowledged strong constructions of dichotomy, which inhibit the Post-Mao artist to break out of allotted discourses as well as the marginalizing of actors involved in the process.

The western perception that contemporary art is produced under repressed circumstances and in opposition to the Chinese government, might lead the audience not to question their artistic

value as much (market produced or not authentic) as they do with art of the Post-Mao generation.

But this gap of artistic knowledge of China as traditional leads to another problem of legitimacy arising. The perception of what Chinese art is, is to a large degree bound to symbols of traditional Chinese art forms.

6.0 Conclusion

This paper has taken a closer look at the ways in which the arena of CCA is being intersubjectively constructed though media-distributed receptions. Emphasize did here lay on the role of national identities constructed in the arena of CCA. By looking closer at the ways in which reviews were establishing relations between different voices in the CCA arena (as connected or antagonized) did the German production of reception towards Chinese culture, society and politics become clear.

This paper aimed to answer the following research question:

Why is the reception of the CCA in Germany and Switzerland being politicized?

This paper has shown how the media has politicized CCA to establish a western hegemony over China. The establishment of hegemony is in accordance to a functional explanation not viewed as a cognitive and active construction by the German media but are viewed as latent functions. In this sense are political discourses and stereotypes surrounding China frequently introduced into CCA reviews to establish the normative superiority of western heritage and values like democracy, freedom or in the cultural heritage of western art. Chinas identity is here established negatively and often undifferentiated, thus as the other. The view of China as the other has been established as the dominant meaning conveyed through the data. A western identity is established in opposition to the Chinese identity and constructed as desirable.

The Mao-Generations identity is constructed as sharing western values by rejecting the Chinese state. The Mao-Generation is therefore embraced by the western audience. It is though established that the Post-Mao generation is a departure from this direct political link between and therefore in a position between a western and Chinese identity is viewed with ambivalence as well. Consequently does the Post-Mao Generation become a symbol of the oppositional meaning conveyed, as they are the group which is portrayed most differentiated throughout the media. The Post-Mao generation not enjoyed the same amount of success as its Generation prior, but managed to develop a positive recognition by the German media through western ascribed values. Their work is though frequently called into question by German reviews when connected to other discourses, although they themselves are trying to break out of these ascribed identities.

But the denial of politics as the basis for Post-Mao generations work has repositioned these artists from the one of allies to the west to a position of uncertainty. This new generation is

then met with less admiration and success than the Mao-Generation but are also understood as differentiated.

The reviews thus established a normative hegemony which is frequently reinforced through the limitation of receptions of artists as other than dissidents, by questioning CCA as an art form altogether or in rejecting the Chinese character of their work overall.

And while it is acknowledged that Post-Mao artists are trying to escape their limited role restrictions by the de-symbolization through their art is this not evident in the data. The absence of power of the Chinse artists in the CCA discourse is overwhelming. Except of Ai Weiwei are almost no artists quoted or paraphrased in any way. Neither are Chinese curators or anyone involved in the process of producing CCA which are not western. The inherent perspectivism becomes abundant here, as the need for intercultural understanding between Germany and China is being emphasized on multiple occasions as the negotiated meaning, by never thematized in depth. The reviews can through this cultural gap then keep explaining the lack of understanding for China and uphold the construction as the other which simoultaniously acknowledging that the construction of the other is a construction rather than onthologically true. The reviews are though mostly reproducing stereotypes instead, using art to discuss Chinas political actions rather than taking the opportunity to gap this cultural bridge by going beyond superficial description of what the exhibitions are. The encoded message of CCA actors are thus lost through these reviews.

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