

SWISS WATER CHINESE INK 瑞士之水 · 中国之墨

EXHIBITION CROSSING BORDERS AND FIELDS

一个跨越国界、跨领域的艺术展览

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



BACKGROUND

At the XVIII World Water Congress, for the first time held in China, a great number of national representatives and experts, scholars in the water sector gathered in Beijing on the 11th-15th of September, sharing their experiences and techniques for solving local water challenges. The theme of the congress, “Water for All: Harmony between Humans and Nature,” reflects the core values of the ancient philosophy in China and the indigenous relationship of civilisation with nature. The congress provides a great platform for wisdom-sharing on water governance, effective water resource utilisation and protection. The “Beijing Declaration” was passed by the Congress to encourage collaboratively working to achieve the UN 2030 Agenda.

EXHIBITION

In parallel to extensive discussions and exchanges on economic, productive, and ecological challenges and solutions about water resources, there is also a sizable exhibition taking place at the basement level where a wide-ranging of cultural and technological achievements from governmental organisations and private sectors being exposed. The “Swiss Water, Chinese Ink” art exhibition was a unique representation of water through artistic language among the exhibitors, bringing a touch of softness and sensuality to the industrial surroundings. The simplicity of the exhibition attracted hundreds of attendees by day to read and absorb the stories and energies from the artwork.

背景

9月11日至15日，第十八届世界水大会首次在中国举办，众多国家代表和水资源专家及学者齐聚北京，分享他们解决当地水资源挑战的经验和技术。大会的主题“水与万物：人与自然和谐共生”充分反映了中国古代哲学思想的核心价值以及当代人类文明应有的与自然的本土关系。大会为治水、有效利用和保护水资源提供了一个分享智慧的绝佳平台。大会通过了“北京宣言”，呼吁各方共同努力，实现联合国2030年议程。

艺术展

在广泛讨论和交流有关水资源的经济、生产和生态挑战及解决方案的同时，大会的地下一



The 9-m long exhibition wall where one side exhibits a series of paintings created Switzerland
九米长的展墙的一面展示了在艺术家秦超颖在瑞士日内瓦创作的一系列以水为主题的绘画作品



The live-painting creation process, improvised during the 4-day congress exhibition
为期四天的大会展览期间即兴创作的现场绘画过程

Although having experienced major obstacles due to exhibition space and customs clearance of the body of work that was originally intended for exhibition, the final outcome of the project was another form of perfection beyond any foreseen planning or imagination. Golden flower petals are spread across the floor to create an ambience of peace and divinity – this is the artist's way highlighting the sacredness through the water element. One side of the wall displays a series of paintings created in Geneva, Switzerland. On the opposite side of the wall, the artist Charlotte Qin improvised an ink painting on 3 x 9.7 m fabric-covered exhibition panels. The live-painting was a piece of ongoing creation throughout the four-day exhibition. It had become one of the highlights at the congress, where people stopped and shared their stories about water, their interpretation of the painting, and the emotions they experienced through the painting. The painting is an emotional birth of the congress, another form of memory to the attendees.

层还举办了一个规模庞大的集体展览，来自政府组织和私营部门的各种文化和技术成果在此中得到展示。“瑞士之水，中国之墨” 这项艺术展是大会群展中的一个绝对独特的展示，吸引了众多与会者。此展通过的艺术语言对水进行了独特的表现，为展区的工业环境带来了一丝柔和与感性的气息。简洁、独特的展览每天都吸引了数百名与会者前来阅读和吸收艺术作品中的故事和能量。

尽管由于展览空间和原定展览作品的清关问题遇到了重大障碍，但该项目的最终成果却是另一种形式的完美，超出了任何预想的规划和想象。金色的花瓣铺满地面，营造出宁静和神圣的氛围，是艺术家通过水元素突出神圣感的一种方式。墙的一侧展示了艺术家秦超颖在瑞士日内瓦创作的一系列以水为主题的绘画作品。在墙的另一侧，艺术家在 3 x 10 米的织物展板上即兴创作了一幅水墨画，在为期四天的展览中，她持续不断地现场创作。这张画已成为大会的亮点之一，人们在这里驻足，分享他们与水的故事、他们对这幅画的理解，以及他们通过这幅画所体验到的情感。这幅画是大会情感的结晶，是与会者的一种记忆形式。

IMPACT

This chapter explores the impact of the exhibition as part of the “One Million Youth Action (1MYAC)” initiative of SDC and how its unique appearance at the predominantly scientific, solution-oriented World Water Congress had shaped the experiences of the attendees at an individual and interpersonal level. Although the impact cannot be numerically measured, we cannot deny the fact that our traditional scientific method will not provide a full picture of the reality. At this congress where the original plans had been twisted and altered, we learned from the *rivers* to surrender to the process and adapt to changes because we are waters – water always gets to where it needs to go.

Prior to the congress, we had identified two characteristics of the cultural background of China, which made the congress a perfect entry point of local impact for the 1MYAC initiative. The first being the division between art and science which occurs early in the education system. Despite the economic successes China has achieved in the last decades, China has yet to realise the

影响

本章探讨了本次展览作为瑞士发展合作署的“百万青年行动（1MYAC）”倡议的项目所产生的影响，以及在本次以科学为主导、以解决问题为导向的世界水资源大会上的独特亮相如何在个人和人际层面影响了会者的体验。虽然这种艺术引导的影响力无法用数字来衡量，但我们不能否认，我们传统的科学方法无法提供现实的全貌。在这次水大会上，虽然策展的原定计划被改变，但从河流身上，我们学会了去顺从自然的过程和演变，因为我们人都是水——水总会到达它要去的地方。

在这次大会之前，我们已经意识到了中国文化背景下的两个特点，这使得这次大会成为 1MYAC 计划在当地产生影响的一个完美切入点。首先是艺术与科学之间的分野，这种分野

Exhibition tour and art talk with the General Director Jin Hai (third from the right) of the International Cooperation, Science and Technology Department, Ministry of Water Resources, P.R. China
参观展览并与中国水利部国际合作与科技司金海司长（右三）进行艺术交流



impact of creative fields such as art and design at an institutional level. Moreover, we also recognise that the international conference is an opportunity with space for innovation where cultures merge and differences diffuse, new ideas and perceptions can emerge out of homogeneity.

Water: animism as a tool of sensiblisation

In Switzerland, Charlotte had been working with the Rhone River, as well as other accessible local elements to create emotional experiences for people to connect with various water bodies such as glaciers, oceans, and rivers. Even in an enviroment absent from natural water, Charlotte uses Chinese ink to draw people closer to experience the water element.

The golden colour in Charlotte's artworks represents the "spirit", through which she intends to express that water is living; river is a macro-organnism whereas we humans, animals, and plants reside within as smaller life units. This idea goes hand-in-hand with the congress sessions on indigenous water management while the exhibition space provides a safe space for many to reflect on the emotions and spiritualities related to water.

几十年中取得了巨大的经济成就，但中国体制下还尚未认识到艺术和设计等创意领域的启发性和影响力。此外，我们也认识到，本次国际会议是一个有创新空间的机遇——在这里，文化交融、差异扩散，新的想法和观念可以从同质化中诞生。

水：万物有灵论是感知的工具

在瑞士，艺术家秦超颖一直与罗纳河以及她能接触到的当地自然元素暧昧合作，为人们创造与冰川、海洋和河流等各种水体相联系的情感体验。即使在没有自然水域的环境中，秦超颖也会采用中国墨——自己的艺术作品或者现场表演——拉近人与水元素的距离。

秦超颖作品中的金色象征着“灵魂”，她希望通过这种方式表达水是有生命的；河流是一个宏观的有机体，而我们人类、动物和植物则是作为更小的单位居住在其中。这一理念与大会关于本土水资源管理的会议相辅相成，而展览空间则为许多人提供了一个安全的空间，让他们思考与水有关的情感和精神。



Theme painting of the exhibition "Forbidden City" created in Geneva, Switzerland (created in 2023, Chinese ink and acrylic on canvas)

在瑞士日内瓦创作的《紫荆城》(2023创作，中国水墨和丙烯画布展览主题画)



Improvised ink painting “Yan Huang” created during the World Water Congress (3 x 10 m)
世界水大会期间创作的即兴水墨画 《紫荆城》展览主题画（3 x 10米）

Ink: a cultural collision

The Chinese character, to govern, “治 (zhi)”, is composed of water on its left side, and a stage “台 (tai)”, on its right side. The role of the government is inherently to work with water: managing the rivers to prevent the impact of floods and droughts, utilising and preserving water resources for agricultural irrigation, economic activities of the civilisation. The other story that signifies a origin of water heritage in Chinese history is China’s most symbolic creature, the dragon, embodying the super natural forces of water bodies such as the seas, and the clouds, where the dragon kings reside. The shape of the dragon mimics the meandering river where the collage of boy parts of the different livelihood whose lives all depend on the river, a splendid imagination of the ancient civilisation.

The 10-m long painting was named after “Yan Huang”, the two ancestors of the Chinese civilisation, Flame Emperor (Yandi) and Yellow Emperor (Huangdi). Although created improvisationally, the ink painting unconsciously captured the origin of Chang Jiang and Huang He, the two mother rivers of the Chinese civilisation which share the same origin in the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau. The Chinese people call themselves the decedents of “Yan Huang” or the Dragon (the rivers) – illustrating a harmonious image of the civilisation embeded in its live-giving source of water.

中国水墨：文化的碰撞

中国的水文化源远流长。汉字中“治国”的“治”的左边是“水”，右边是“台”。政府的职责从古至今根本上就是在与水打交道：治理河流，防止水灾和旱灾的影响；利用和保护水资源，用于农业灌溉和文明的经济活动。另一个寓意中国历史上悠久的水的故事是中国最具象征意义的图腾——龙。龙的形态体现了水体的超自然力量，如龙王居住的深海和空中的云层，是一个链接天和地的神物。龙的形状模仿了蜿蜒曲折的河流，由不同动物的拼贴结合了所有依靠河流为生的生命体，这是古代文明的绚丽想象。

这幅长 10 米的画作以中华文明的两位始祖炎帝和黄帝名字《炎黄》命名这幅10米的画作于大会结束之后竣工。虽然是即兴创作之作，但却无意识地捕捉到了中华文明的两条母亲河——同源于青藏高原的长江和黄河。中华民族自称为“炎黄子孙”或“龙（河流）的传人”——诠释了中华文明蕴含在生生不息的水源之中的和谐形象。

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The exhibition was initiated by QinTheory Studio (the company of the artist, Charlotte Qin) and co-funded by the Swiss Agency of Development and Cooperation. The project was recognised by the International Cooperation, Science and Technology Department, Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), P.R. China, in relation to the congress organiser, MoWR's division, General Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Planning and Design (GIWP), China. The proposal was finally included as part of the congress exhibition by China Water Enterprises Confederation.

Among the organisers mentioned above, I want to thank particularly Dr. Daniel Maseli, the father of 1MYAC initiative who supported my activities as an artist, young ambassador for water over the past year; Ms. Nadia Benani and Ms. Bai Jie from the Embassy of Switzerland in Beijing for their generous support financially, emotionally in facing many challenges; Commissioner Hou from the GIWP for his patient guidance during the preparation phase, as well as Director Jing and Commissioner Chi from the ICST for their support and encouragement on the exhibition.

The team who had created the exhibition comes from Beichuang International, a Beijing-based exhibition company specialised in constructing art fairs. The dedication and patience of the staff is very respectful. Finally, gratitude to the Guoce International Exhibition Center, who hosted and enabled the completion of the improvised painting created during the conference, "Yan Huang".

Charlotte Qin
22.9.2023

鸣谢

展览由秦論工作室（艺术家秦超颖的公司）发起，由瑞士发展合作署共同资助。该项目得到了中国水利部国际合作与科技司、大会主办方中国水利水电规划设计总院（GIWP）的认可。该提案最终被中国水利企业联合会纳入大会展览。

在上述组织者中，我要特别感谢“1MYAC”之父 Daniel Maseli博士，他在过去的一年里支持了我作为艺术家和水问题青年大使所开展的活动；感谢瑞士驻华大使馆的Nadia Benani女士和白洁女士，她们在面对许多挑战时在经济上和情感上给予了我慷慨的支持；感谢水规总院的侯处长在筹备阶段给予的耐心指导，以及国科司的金司长和池处长对本次展览的支持和鼓励。

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秦超颖
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