



*Shopping Host Guides My Drawing* - Ti Zhang (2018)

# Interview with Ti Zhang

**You have lived around the globe. Can you tell me about the various places you have called home?**

Home to me is like a pleasant place to stay, so I would like to call most of the places I have enjoyed “homes”. Others, I guess were just unsettled spaces guarded by rather unusually + intimidating landlords! My most memorable place is Xiyuan. A little community on the western side of my hometown Xuzhou. I spent almost all my childhood there until I was 8 years old. It’s an intimate neighborhood, a bit shabby compared to the rest of the city, but it has a huge abandoned wire pole in the middle of the road where people love to chat and feed each other’s cats.

**Given that you are connected to places and communities on opposite sides of the world, what or who would you say gives you a “rooting” in this life? Are there certain words, images, memories, people or places that will always help keep you grounded, even when other aspects of life are in constant motion or unsettled?**

To be honest, I tried so hard in the gamble of reconstructing a desired relationship with my high school crush in my hometown, well, I failed instantly at the reunion.

In order to be my ideal boyfriend but not a regular boyfriend, there are three basic requirements he must possess:

1. be supportive
2. have good personal hygiene
3. make my professors happy

**What are some of your oldest memories of making art? Childhood? At home or in school?**

I keyed my father’s first car.

**Before coming to Concordia for your MFA, what mediums did you work in and what ideas did you focus on?**

I have studied many mediums, and just before I applied, I was drawn to the idea of studying consumerism.

I used to steal some brilliant ideas from poems, for example, Bai Ju Yi’s Night Snow:

I was surprised my quilt and pillow were cold,

I see that now the window’s bright again.

Deep in the night, I know the snow is thick,

I sometimes hear the sound as bamboo snaps.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ju Yi, Bai, *Night Snow*, Chinese Poems, <http://www.chinese-poems.com/bj1.html>.



张  
媿

**What would you say are three core concepts that shape your art practice now, since starting your MFA program?**

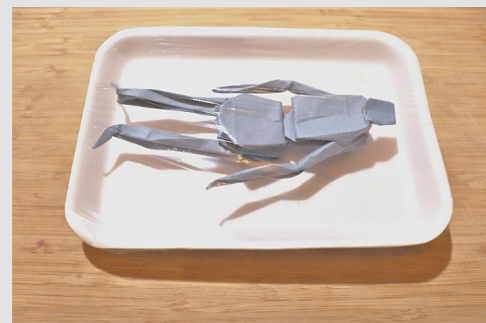
The first concept is consumerism. I cooperate with this term because it is just so much fun. It's more than a conclusion of our shopping behaviours as many scholars have argued, it is more of a sociology study founded upon individual characteristics.

Besides consumerism, I came across the idea of collective unconsciousness in my research for the interior designs. While I was selecting the furniture, I found this item called "barbarous chair", according to the web description, this style is supposed to enhance a "sexy savage vibe" of that space. It made me think that since people have started to unconsciously correlate uncivilized behaviours to sexual attraction, for things like this, we cannot just accuse an actor like Johnny Depp of perpetuating problematic ideas like exoticism... (though I love Johnny Depp so much!)

The last concept is Uber Eats, it keeps me alive. If I died from starvation or bad cooking, there is no art for my audience, for sure!

**You are in the Fibres & Material Practices program, and you mostly work in paper and found objects. Can you tell me why you gravitate so strongly towards paper and folding techniques?**

I don't know if this will be a good surprise, but my new project discusses the relationship between technology and human communication. Paper and paper folding helps glaze my ideas about consumerism with a delicious coat of ancient ideologies; they together make a very nice combo. Recently, I decided to explore more ideas along this vein...



*What Are We Consuming? - Ti Zhang (2020)*

**You've also mentioned an interest in performance in several of our group conversations. Since the concept of performing in public for intimate audiences is very limited due to the pandemic at this time, what would be a performance that you would produce, even if it's only in theory? Have you considered a video documented performance as a way to share this type of work?**

I did a performance in my undergraduate to withdraw and conceal one of my least favored classmate's spirit in a Voodoo doll, and that person, as you might guess, was not very pleased.

During this period of the pandemic, unexpected shows and performances are going on everywhere in this world... I mean—who can compete with this hyper-reality??

**Who is your primary audience? What are two big ideas you want them to take away after viewing your work?**

My primary audience is myself; sometimes, I make art just for own interest. Since there are "no rules in this house", I want people to resonate with my art in a casual way. If they feel cool, I feel cool. Some great artworks educate the public, but my works, I cannot promise more than that I will try.

**Lastly, if your practice was a food, what would it be, and why?**

Cheesecake. You might like it for the first few bites, but after that, you might think it's cheesy in some ways. Then you move on to something classy, hahahaha.

**Do you have a recurring dream/nightmare in your sleep?**

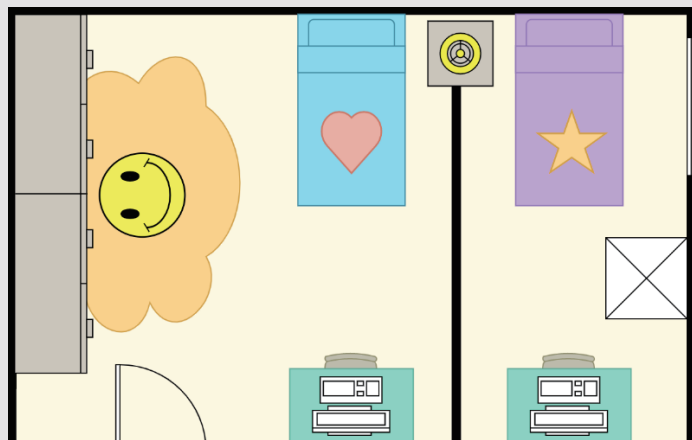
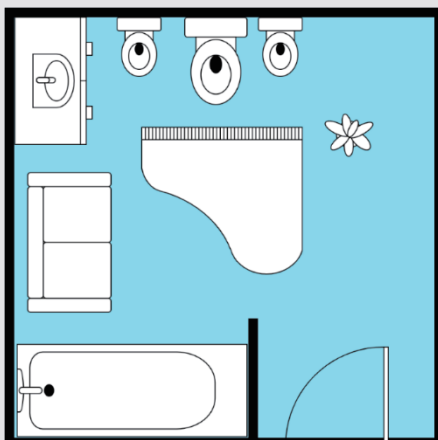
Don't know why I often dreamed about drinking martinis with cute people on beach.

**Best places to "accidentally" bump into you?**

Boxing ring.

**What historical figure, living or dead, would you most like to have dinner with?**

I would like to eat with Paris Hilton, I love the way she says, "that's hot".





*Titi, Doudou, and Roses of Versailles - Ti Zhang (2018)*

**If Hollywood made a movie about your life, who should play you?**

My cousin.

**If you could reincarnate as a plant, which one would you be?**

Peony.

**If you could be texture, what would it be?**

I remembered I said smooth, but I literally don't know.

**Which superpower would you like to have?**

Teleport, everyone should have it, no more rents!

**Do you believe that alternate universes exist, and if yes, what universe are you currently in?**

It's called: Oh Well, Whatever Universe.

**Is there any artist that you would like to share your studio with?**

Riyoko Ikeda, the writer and illustrator of *The Rose of Versailles* (ベルサイユのばら).

**If a wizard ambushed you in the park and made you choose, what category of food would you give life and be forced to keep as your best friend?**

Sea food, like a dead lobster comes back to life.

**What is the oldest piece of art that you have kept of your own creation?**

A shell bracelet.

**What is the most bizarre thing that you've ever done that most other people probably have not done?**

I used to have a mole on my neck, but I think it looked annoying, but my parents had no time to book me with the professional, so I scooped it out myself. I don't recommend performing this medical procedure at home.

Reference

Bai, Ju Yi. *Night Snow*. Chinese Poems. <http://www.chinese-poems.com/bj1.html>.