Synaesthesia and Cross Sensory Practice in Art
- 1st synaesthesia art exhibition and forum in China, cross regional synaesthesia survey

Beijing, XU Zhou and Hang Zhou in October 2016,

Presented by
Project Team of 1st synaesthesia art exhibition and forum in China, cross regional synaesthesia survey
The inauguration ceremony of “2016 Beijing International Synesthesia Art Exhibition” and “1st Synaesthesia Art Exhibition Forum in China: Cross Regional Synaesthesia Survey” was held at Beijing No.1 Art Space Gallery in Beijing Jianguo Garden Hotel on 9th Oct, 2016 with attendance of art amateurs, teachers and students from art colleges and art circles around Beijing.

The exhibition displayed paintings inspired in Chinese classical and foreign music alongside art works reflecting the sensory experience of foreign artists with synaesthesia as well as award winning video art from the international competition MuVi4, music iconography reflecting Chinese ancient art and musical synaesthesia, as well as exhibition panels related to achievements in international synaesthesia research. Notably, photographs demonstrating the phenomenon of synaesthesia in regional Chinese culture aroused much interests; this was linked with the upcoming cross regional programmed synaesthesia survey. The art works were rich and detailed: many in attendance commented that it was “…not just colorful and beautiful pictures or paintings but a kind of new interactive experience between the art works and viewers”.

He Jianwei, the Chinese curator of the exhibition said: “The exhibition jointly sponsored by the Chinese National Academy of Arts Lithography School No.1 Art Space Gallery, Artecitta International Foundation and Chinese Synaesthesia Alliance carried the greatest academic value in recent years held in mainland China in respect to synaesthesia. It also has received the supports not only from the International Artecitta Foundation, but also from the UK Synaesthesia Association, the International Association of Synaesthetes, Artist and Scientist and US Beacon Artist Association. These artists include the Spanish artist and professor Maria Jose De Cordoba, UK artist Timothy B Layden, Italian professor in art and design Dina Riccò, American artist Carol Steen, UK artist James Wannerton, German artists Christine Soffing, Michael Havercamp, Spanish artist Pepa Salas Vilar, New Zealand artist Raewyn Turner and Brian Harris. Meanwhile, we also received excellent support from experts and scholars of China’s Society of Music Iconology and well-known artists in China including He Wenqing, Ninghui Xiong, Mu Xi, Zhou Wufa, Yang Qing, Yuan Wenbin, musician Zhang Xiang, musician vice professor Zhong Li, poet Fang Qinggang and so on. I am also deeply impressed by the unique excellent courseware display created by Chinese artists, the synaesthesia between portrait painting from He Wenqing and the Yellow River Concerto and Synaesthesia Music Fishbone Diagram by Ninghui Xiong.”
In the afternoon of October 9th, 2016 at Beijing Jianguo Garden Hotel No.1 Art Space, with the chime music, the project host Maria Jose De Cordoba (Spain) and Ninghui Xiong (China) jointly unveiled for the 2016 Beijing international art exhibition and synesthesia “1st synesthesia Art Exhibition Forum in China: cross regional synaesthesia survey”.

![Image of the event](image-url)
Posters, panels and artworks in the 2016 Beijing International Synaesthesia Art Exhibition

Courseware panels by Ninghui Xiong and his colleagues for synaesthesia in art for recent years in lecture and workshop in China.
There is a long history of artistic synaesthesia in China, which has been a well known story for more than two thousand years, that Zhong Ziqi could understand the music played by Yu Boya, but it lacks systematic and scientific research. Some Chinese scholars and artists realized this and began to investigate. They have held a series of public educational programs called “Painting Music from Your Heart” in Beijing and Shanghai, with the cooperation of theatres, museums and colleges since 2009, and they also went to the schools for the children of migrant workers to teach students how to draw music. They were invited to participate V International Synaesthesia Congress on Synaesthesia, Science and Art in Spain in 2015 and exchanged for the first time with international synaesthesia academic circles the synaesthesia phenomenon in Chinese ancient art and modern art synaesthesia exploration, which got the attention of international scholars and experts. They took the opportunity to set up a project: “1st Synaesthesia Art Exhibition and Forum: Cross Regional Synaesthesia Survey” which has received positive responses from both domestic art colleges and institutes, including the Chinese Society of Music and Image, Qianjiang College of Hangzhou Normal University, Art and Design College of China University of Mining and Technology, Central Academy of Fine Arts Museum, Beijing Yangmei-Yihua Culture Development Company, Guang Zhou Red Dragonfly Artworks Culture, etc.

During the inauguration ceremony of the project, the President of China’s Society of Music and Iconology Professor LI Yongyou, Vice Dean of Art and Media of Qian Jian College Hangzhou Normal University Professor ZHU Dan, Dean of Fine Arts University of Granada Mr. Francisco Jose Sanchez Montalban, Fellow and Emeritus Director of the John B. Pierce Laboratory affiliated Yale University Professor Lawrence E. Marks, President of UK Synaesthesia Association and Vice President of International Association of Synaesthetes Artists and Scientists Mr. James Wannerton, General Secretary of US Beacon Artist Association Mr. Ding Donghui, also sent congratulation letters to the project team.

Logo Design of Chinese Synaesthesia Alliance by Ninghui XIONG, coming from the 28 constellations wood box for clothes in 2000 years ago and its music composed by musician Zhang Xi.
China’s Society of Music and Iconology, Hangzhou Normal University, University of Grenada, Yale University, British Synaesthesia Association, International Association of Synesthetes Artists and Scientists, US Beacon Artist Association send congratulatory letters for the project launching ceremony of the “First Synaesthesia Art Forum: Cross Regional Synaesthesia Research” held at Beijing No.1 Art Space.

Dr. Maria Jose De Córdoba Serrano, Exhibition Academic Chair, Director of the International Foundation Artecità, Professor of Fine Arts, Granada University said, “I do appreciate the invitation hosted by Mr. Jianwei HE at his Art Gallery with Ninghui and his friends for the great effort for the exhibition. I am very happy and excited to be able to be here for this new project in China, I do hope to learn more here through the project because its culture and art is imbued with an exquisite sensibility, in every sense.”

Professor Li Rongyou, President of China’s Society Music Iconology said in his congratulation letter to the project team: “Introducing the outcome of international synaesthesia congress into China, promoting synaesthesia in science dissemination, at the same time developing the China cross regional synaesthesia survey, comparing and analyzing the difference between China and the West in synesthesia, opening the dialogue between the east and west regarding art and synaesthesia, all of these
are very important with much academic value and benefit. More than ten years ago, Mr. Ninghui Xiong was involved in the practice of synaesthesia in art, exploring the meaning of Chinese synaesthesia between music and painting. This is fully consistence with our objective, which is to follow the tradition -- Music is leading total art integration. He also worked closely with other members in our society, organized a series of activities with interdisciplinary synaesthesia painting workshops, attended the International Synaesthesia Congress with Professor Ding Tongjun for culture and art communication, and organized academic circles internationally. Meanwhile, his study also gained the attention of other members of our society including Researcher Zhang Xiang, Professor Liu Yong, Li Aizhen, Wang Lei, Dr. Zhu Xiaofeng, Zhong Li and Fang Qinggang. Under our joint efforts, the First Synaesthesia Art Forum will be held successfully, which will mark a new stage in the study of Chinese Synaesthesia research in art.

UK artist Dr. Timothy B Layden, invited principal curator, said: “I am fascinated by how human beings use resources to create new things which have the ability to alter the way they, as well as others who may or may not be artists themselves, see the world. So what is it that artists do? We manipulate resources that we learn to use to change the environment in ways that alter how it is interacted with and what we think about it. Artistic expression has the ability to unearth the rawest, truest aspects of what it is to be a living sentient, self aware being; perhaps more so than any other discipline, for it is labored upon from the subjective point of view of individuals who have invested substantial time and effort into developing particular skills that they use despite any sense of shame or imperfection to share the most vulnerable aspects of their experience. Many synaesthetes choose to use their synaesthetic experience as the focus of much of their artwork. This is of particular interest to me as a synaesthete; I like to see how others represent their experiences and reflect upon my own as well as the diversity that exists within the immense spectrum of human experience.”

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Following the event in Beijing, the project team carried out a variety of activities in Xuzhou and Hangzhou, including art exhibitions and workshops within the university academy exchange program frame contract related to synaesthesia study. The next step will continue in Guangzhou and other cities. The lectures of “Synaesthesia and Creativity” made by Dr. Maria Jose De Cordoba Serrano and “Art synaesthesia in China” made by Ninghui Xiong, as well as exhibition panels related to international synaesthesia research achievements contributed by international synaesthesia study expects gained great attention from teachers. “ The International Conference of Synaesthesia”, “synaesthesia research project by Maria Jose de Cordoba”, “Scientist Lawrence Marks/Danko Nikolic talking about Synaesthesia”, “Musician Jose Lopez Montes/ Rudenko Svetlana /Alexandra Kirschner talking about Synaesthesia”, “Exploring the shape of sound by Timothy B Layden”, “Visual Music and Synaesthesia
MuVi4 International Competition by Dina Riccò”, “Influence to the art creation by synaesthesia experience by Carol Steen ”, “Art synaesthesia from taste by James Wannerton”, “Synaesthesia Perception Support the Product Design by Michael Havercamp” and so on, the content was novel, unique and innovative according to their feedback.

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In the last session, “Synaesthesia and Cross Sensory Practice in Art Workshop” held in Hangzhou Normal University in the afternoon of October 19th, Professor Maria Jose De Cordoba guided students to participate in the cross sensory practice of converting sound to painting, and image to music. The activity was very interesting. The students who major in musical performance, art and design were fully involved; they expressed themselves with their hands, painting, with musical instruments and dance. The atmosphere was lively.

Maria Jose De Córdoba Serrano said, “people possess synaesthetic features at an early age, as they grow up, the function of the brain controlling the senses gradually separates. Many people lose the ability of synesthesia, but through certain practices, such abilities can be restored to a certain extent.”
Ding Tongjun, professor of Qianjiang College of Hangzhou Normal University said, “These exercises are in line with what we have explored and practiced in recent years in China, including “synaesthesia fishbone diagram analysis” and “Da Vinci device – music painting composition synaesthesia methodology”. If we combine them together, it will help us to cultivate the ability of synaesthesia, which is helpful to the cultivation of creative thinking through training. If we consciously apply the method of synaesthesia and open our senses, we can breakdown our mindset and find work needed for improvement. Therefore, synaesthesia consciousness is the key. This is also the purpose of our cooperation with international educational institutions to explore this cross interdisciplinary research”.

As a summary, the project leader Ninghui Xiong said, “it’s the first time in China for synaesthesia dissemination through Art Exhibition/Forum/Survey so wide and deep. However, we have just begun, there is still a long way to go. I would like to thank my colleagues and friends in China and abroad for their consistent effort and great support, including those experts to be mentioned: Lawrence Marks, Sean Day, Sidoroff-Dorso, Danko Nokolic, Jörg Jewanski, James Wannerton, Carol Steen, Patricia Lynn Duffy, Jose Lopez Montes, Svetlana Rudenko and Alexandra Kirschner etc.. I knew them through V International Synaesthesia Congress Science and Art hosted by the Artecitta Foundation which is an international organization leading synaesthesia interdisciplinary study and dissemination in education. By working together, I am sure we will have success.”