Xu Bing:
from *Book from the Sky* to *Book from the Ground*

Spring, 2009
Sm2220
Experimental literature
Xu Bing  徐冰

*challenge our assumptions about language
*arts associated with bookmaking (calligraphy, writing and printing)

http://www.xubing.com/

*Book from the Sky  天书 (1987-1991)*
Big Tyre (1986)

**Institution:** Beijing, China

**Materials:** Tire, Print, Ink, Paper

A print can be taken from almost any solid surface. In 1986, Xu Bing and his students made "Big Wheel", a print of giant truck tire treads. The exhibition of the tire itself along with the print marked one of the first examples of installation art in Beijing.

Materials:

Mixed media installation / Hand-printed books and scrolls printed from blocks inscribed with "false" characters.

An installation that took Xu Bing over four years to complete, A Book from The Sky is comprised of printed volumes and scrolls containing four thousand "false" Chinese characters invented by the artist and then painstakingly hand-cut onto wooden printing blocks.
[Characters from the document]
ABC (1991)

Materials: Ungiazed terracotta installation / Woodblock

The theme of this work is the awkwardness encountered in linguistic exchange between different cultures.

It is comprised of 38 ceramic cubes that represent a sort of transliteration from the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet to Chinese characters. The characters that have been chosen are such that, when pronounced, render sounds equivalent to the English letter they represent.

The Chinese characters are caved on the upper face of the each ceramic block in the form of a printer's stamp and the Roman letter is printed on the side of the block. For example, the English letter 'A' is rendered by the Chinese 'ai', which means sadness. 'B' is rendered 'bi', which means land on the other side, on the other shore. Some letters need two or three Chinese characters to 'transliterate'. For example, 'W' is rendered 'da', 'bu', 'liu' which means big, cloth and six.

This activity may begin with a becoming logic, but ultimately it leaves its subject, transliterated language, virtually meaningless and almost ridiculous.
Institution: Marstall Performance Center, Munich, Germany
Materials: Performance, mixed media installation / Ink and live pigs.

Initially performed in Beijing…
The work revealed an unexpected and surprising dynamic between the spectators and the spectacle.

Before the event took place there was some concern that the pigs would become too nervous to perform the crucial act. But the result was just the opposite: the pigs themselves were completely unfazed, and blithely ignoring their human onlookers pursued their lovemaking with great gusto. It was rather the audience members who found themselves in an embarrassing and awkward position. Xu Bing wanted to expose the limitations and the inability to adapt of the human audience.

Xu Bing, "These two creatures, devoid of human consciousness, yet carrying on their bodies the marks of human civilization, engage in the most primal form of 'social intercourse.'

To the artist, the process of caring for and working with the pigs constitutes "a kind of ongoing sociological experiment, touching on myriad issues."
Cultural Animal 文化动物 (1994)

Materials: Performance media installation with live animal / Live Pig, books, mannequin, wood blocks, ink.
A follow-up on A Case of Transference
Book from the Ground 地书 (2003 - now, work-in-progress)

Materials: Mixed media: Software, Works on paper

A new experimental project that deals with the natural formation of a global language. Please visit www.bookfromtheground.com for more information about this ongoing project.

Book from the Ground 地书
Date: 2007
Materials: software and Plexiglas panel with text on mylar
Institution: MoMA, New York
Website: www.bookfromtheground.com
他爱她，他想送给她一朵花。
他去咖啡店叫了一杯咖啡，付钱后，拿着咖啡坐了下来。
他给她寄了一封信。
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