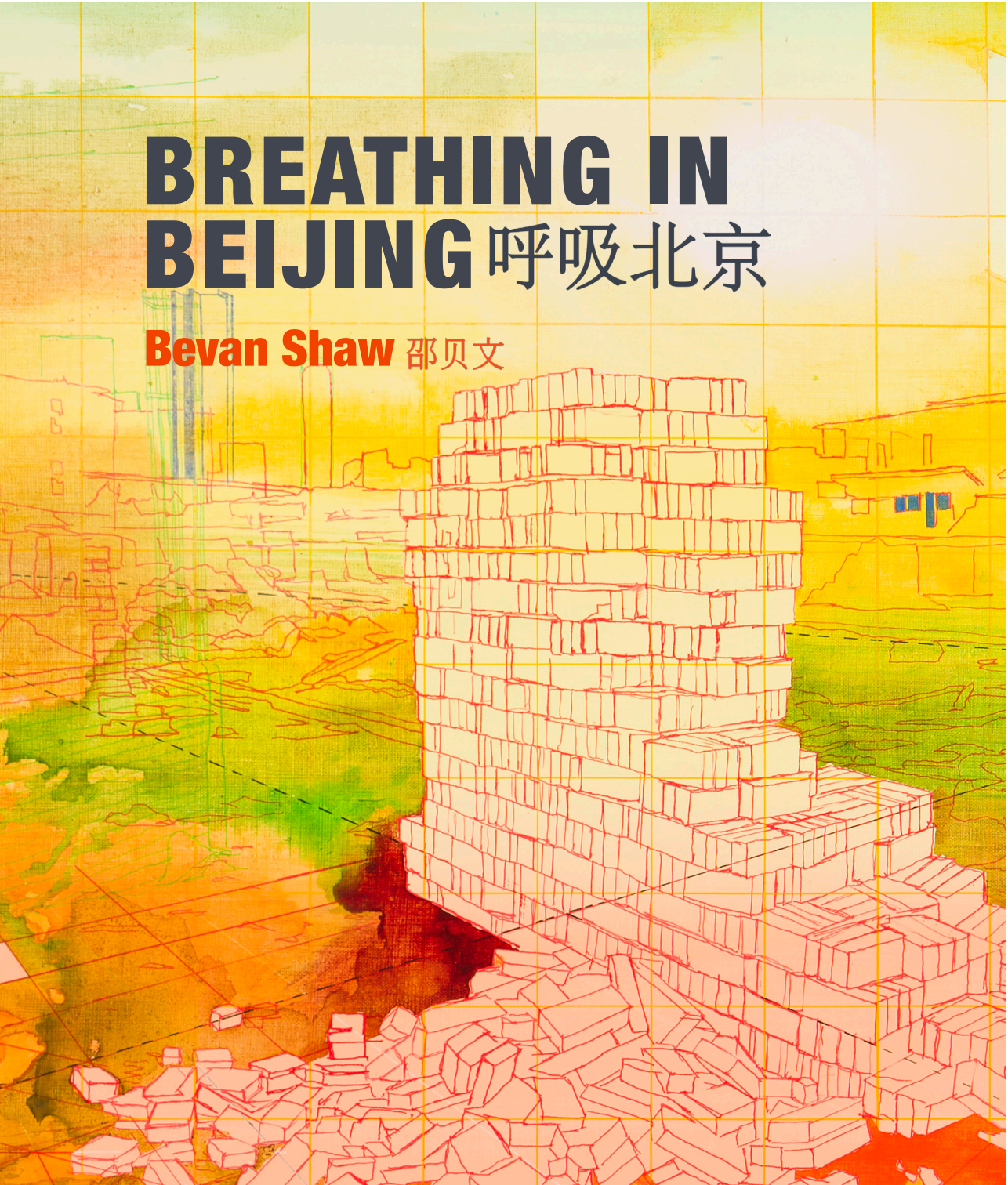


# BREATHING IN BEIJING 呼吸北京

**Bevan Shaw** 邵贝文

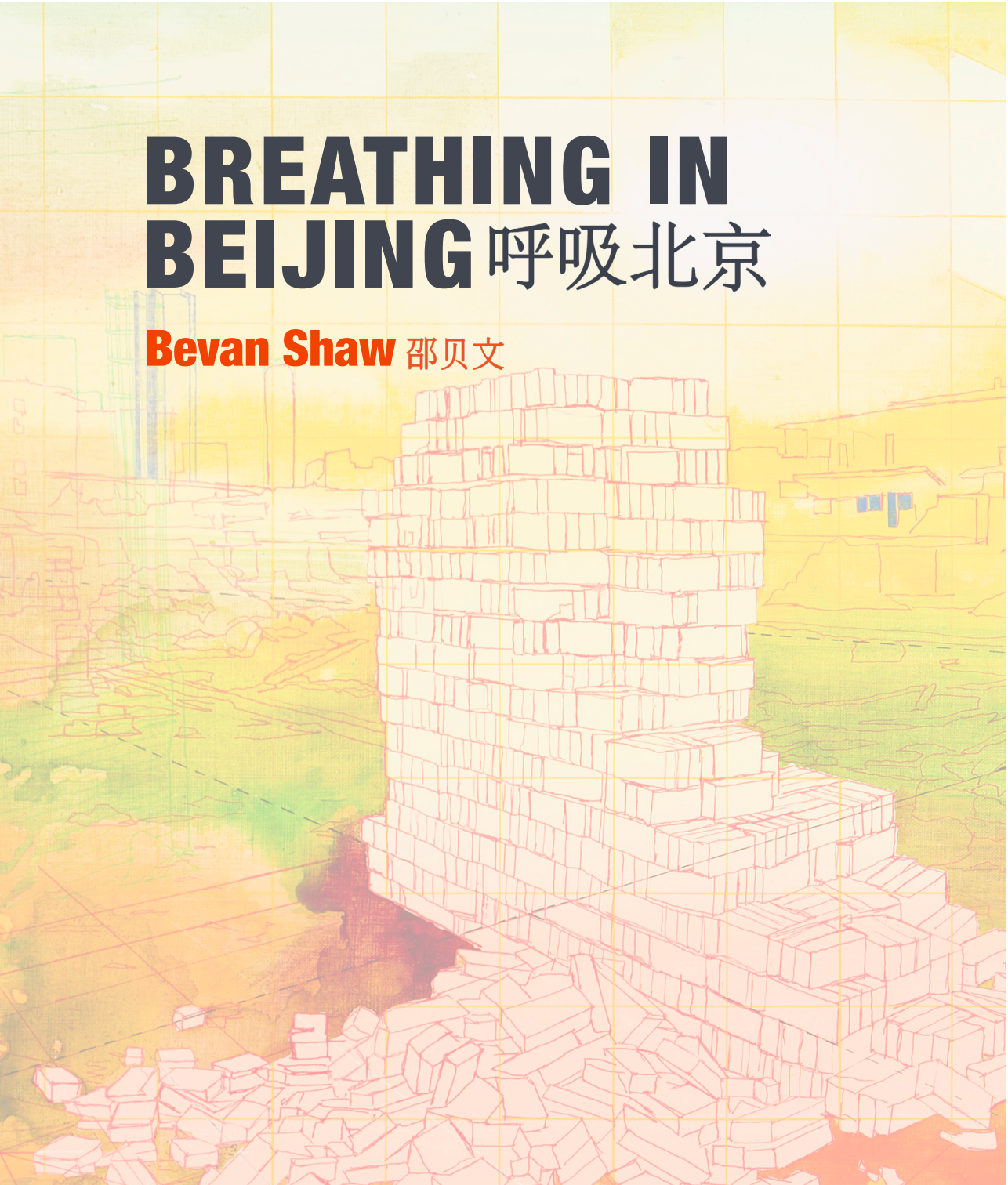






# BREATHING IN BEIJING 呼吸北京

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On the northeastern outskirts of Beijing, situated just outside of the city's 5th Ring Road, and a stone's throw from the 6-lane Airport Express Way, lies the small village of Feijiacun (费家村). Despite the close-knit rural character that its name implies,<sup>1</sup> Feijiacun is more aptly called a "village" in China's modern, urban sense of the word: small in size, but hardly pastoral. No longer a quiet home to local farmers, as was the case a few decades ago, Feijiacun now forms a crowded, bustling migrant community and enclave, inhabited by thousands of rural migrant workers<sup>2</sup> from all over China. This same "urban village" is also where Bevan Shaw spent three months as an artist-in-residence.

Despite its proximity to some of Beijing's busiest thoroughfares, a nearby subway station, as well as numerous wealthy gated communities and shopping plazas, Feijiacun feels relatively isolated. Indeed, much of its immediate surroundings consist of farmland that sits untilled and unused, as well as a handful of other small "urban villages" that have also been swallowed by Beijing's ever-expanding sprawl.

Although the total area of Feijiacun is relatively small, it is densely developed. Past the village's ad-hoc gates, clusters of boxy, concrete buildings are interspersed with dusty alleys and lanes, many lined with countless small shop fronts. The shops sell a variety of goods and services, ranging from groceries and mobile phones, to haircuts. Packed with both residential and commercial spaces, these small streets are often teeming and noisy, filled with the hustle and bustle of everyday life. This is especially true at the end of the workday when hundreds of the village's migrant tenants return from work to wander through the dense network of shop fronts to do errands, buy groceries, grab a quick bite to eat, get a haircut, or play a game of pool.

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1. The name "Feijiacun" can be literally translated to 'Fei Family Village.' This name hints at what was most likely this village's not so distant past: a small rural farming village inhabited primarily by extended members of the Fei family.

2. Since China began economic reforms in the late 70's, China went from a country that was less than 17% urban, to one that is more than 55% urban. This transformation has been largely fueled by the hundreds of rural-urban migrants who have traveled to China's rapidly expanding cities in search of better economic opportunity.

In just over two years of observation, the village has been in constant flux: new structures are built, old ones are torn down; two stories become three; businesses open and then close; what once sold dumplings now sells mobile phones. Change is unceasing. It remains familiar, but the details have changed.

In spite of the village's transformation and continued development, much of Feijiacun's physical environment remains relatively substandard. Waste removal is makeshift at best, piles of trash are commonly found throughout the village. On the western edge of the village, a small bridge crosses a creek of dark greenish water filled with trash that also emanates the powerful smell of raw sewage. Inadequate drainage leads to substantial flooding during downpours. Down small alleyways off main thoroughfares, crude spray-painted messages tell passersby "littering and urinating are prohibited." Lacking in both central heating and gas lines, the smell of coal is constant throughout the year and is particularly oppressive in Beijing's colder, winter months.

Despite these objectively unpleasant characteristics, the community itself, at least to the outsider, does not feel neglected. It does not feel desolate. While walking through the village, one experiences the trappings of everyday life: mothers walking with their children, small groups of men playing cards or chess on the side of the road, sounds of stacking tiles flowing from mahjong parlours. As an outsider, the forefront of the village experience is not the physical shortcomings of its environment, but the everyday activity of thousands of migrant workers. In three months of living and working in the village Shaw has captured some of these observations and feelings in his work.



Most discourse around the urbanization of China emphasizes the theme of 'flux' – transience, change, and the unknown. This framework for discussion could not be more relevant in the case of Feijiacun, a place in such transience that most of the people who live there expect it to be razed and redeveloped in the near future.

While Bevan Shaw's work in *Breathing in Beijing* does indeed evoke these ideas and issues, what we see more clearly, specifically in *Village* and *North Gate*, is a succinctly captured moment within a constantly transforming environment. Through these works, Shaw portrays the village of Feijiacun as untethered by its unknown fate and allows the viewer to focus solely on a moment in time and place.

In the works *North Gate* and *Village*, Shaw subtly and precisely depicts life in Feijiacun. He captures the vibrancy of the village through his use of bright colors and geometric patterns, reminding us of the disjuncture between the village's objective and subjective experience. *North Gate* also draws references from outside of Feijiacun. By using a vertical composition of stacked horizon lines inspired by the perspective found in Chinese traditional painting, Shaw is able to incorporate views of the surrounding land use and the approaching city. The grids that form the background of his works allude to both the palatial doors in the Forbidden City, as well as Beijing's omnipresent scaffolding.

These works do not necessarily push a larger social, moral or political message on the viewer. Rather, the artist pieces together the visual information from his surroundings, creating a collage of a moment. The real subject of the work is in the detailed renditions of glowing signs, hanging wires, crumbling sidewalks, stray dogs, piles of bricks, heaps of garbage and passersby. These details are visual markers integral to the experience of Feijiacun.

For rural migrants, life in the village is both a form of opportunity and marginalization. For many people, moving to Feijiacun provided the chance to open a small shop or business, find a decent job, or live more affordably. However, after talking with shopkeepers and village residents at length, we found that few planned to make a permanent life in either Feijiacun or Beijing. In fact, returning back to one's hometown was the only concrete plan that anyone seemed to have.

As much as Feijiacun is perceived as a temporary destination, most migrants remain solely focused on their present condition within the village.



Feijiacun is not the foundation for anyone's plans or aspirations, and yet people still manage to make a life for themselves that is secure at the present moment. Shaw's work depicts exactly that: he portrays Feijiacun as a place without the weight of what is to come or what should be. He focuses on what is there now, without over-emphasizing its uncertainty and precariousness. In both cases, the migrant and the artist succeed in creating something solid and immobile in an environment that is anything but. For the artist, it is the painting. For the migrant, it is the village itself.

**EMMA F. KARASZ** moved to Beijing in 2012 and was Program Director of Red Gate Residency from 2013 - 2015. She is a member of the Concrete Flux collective, a multi-disciplinary, bilingual journal and platform.

**NICHOLAS A.B. CHAR** is a young researcher currently based in Beijing. From 2014 - 2015, he conducted fieldwork in Feijiacun while researching the social mobility of migrant micro-entrepreneurs. He graduated from with an M.A. in Social Development and Public Policy from Beijing Normal University in 2015.

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费家村位于北京城东北方五环外的郊区，6 车道机场高速的不远处。尽管费家村这个名字亲密地暗示着乡土特色，但这是一个中国现代城市意味的“村子”，规模很小，没有畜牧业。不像几十年前那样，费家村已不再是农民们安静的家园，而形成成为一个拥挤忙碌的移民社区，来自中国各地的几千外地人的居住所在<sup>2</sup>。Bevan Shaw 在这个“城市型乡村”里完成了三个月的驻留项目。

尽管费家村临近一些北京的繁华地段、地铁以及富有社区，它仍然感觉很孤立。

事实上，它的周边是许多未开垦的农田和其他的一些随着北京城市不断膨胀吞噬形成的类似的“城市型乡村”。

虽然费家村占地面积相对较小，却密集地发展着。穿过村民们建造的临时大门，一堆箱子和水泥建筑，后面散布着灰尘飞扬的小道，道上有数不清的小商铺。商店售卖各种商品，提供各种服务，如日常用品，手机以及理发店等。这些小街道挤满了住宅和商业空间，常常拥挤而嘈杂，充满了日常生活的忙碌与喧哗。尤其是每个工作日傍晚，当上百拥有移民信念的村民从城市的工作中返回村里，在密集的商铺中穿梭，买日常用品，吃个快餐，理发或者打台球。

在短短两年调研中，费家村处于不断的变动中：新的结构建立，旧的被摧毁；两件事情变成三件；商铺开展又歇业；曾经卖饺子的地方变为卖手机。变化不断。整体保持相似，但是细节已经不同。

尽管费家村不断转变和持续发展，许多环境仍然保持相对低级的状态。转移垃圾只是权宜之计，整个村子里随处可见成堆的垃圾物。在村子西边缘有一座小桥横跨一条充满垃圾的暗绿色小河，散发着强烈的下水道臭味。在下雨天，不合理的排水系统导致了明显的积水泛滥。在大街小巷的墙上都有粗糙的喷涂标示“禁止随地乱扔和随地大小便”。由于缺少集中供暖和天然气，村子里全年都充斥着煤气味道，在北京寒冷的冬季尤其令人窒息。

除去这些令人不快的客观特征，尤其是对于外来人口来说，费家村本身并非不受重视。这并不是一个荒凉的社区。若是在村里走街串巷，便能体验到一些日常生活的标志：妈妈带着孩子们闲逛，一小部分男人们在马路边玩牌或下象棋，棋牌室里打麻将哗啦啦的声音。作为外来人，村中最重要的生活体验并非生态环境上的缺陷，而是上千个外地人每日的生活活力。Shaw 在费家村居住的三个月中，就捕捉到了一些观察和感受，并实践于作品中。

围绕中国城市化的大部分讨论中都强调了“变动”的主题——短暂，变换和未知。在这个讨论的框架下，费家村的情况是最好的例子——一个大多数居民都期望着近期能够拆迁和重建的短暂社区。而 Bevan Shaw 的系列作品“呼吸北京”便唤起了这些想法和问题，特别在画作“村子”和“北门”中，清晰简洁地捕捉到了环境持续转变的瞬间。在这些作品中，他描绘出费家村不受限的未知命运，并使观众仅仅专注于时间和空间上的瞬间。

在“北门”和“村子”中，Shaw 朦胧而又精确地描绘出费家村的生活。他运用明亮的色彩和几何图形刻画出费家村的活力，提醒着我们村子客观和主观体验的分离。



“北门”同样描绘了费家村之外的环境。受到中国传统绘画的启发，运用层叠地平线的垂直构图，他把周边的环境以及扩张的城市景色合并在一幅画中。作品背景中的格子既暗含着故宫宏伟的殿门，又隐喻着北京无处不在的脚手架。

这些作品并不一定要强加给观众一个强大的社会，道德或者政治讯息。更确切地说，这些作品是集合了 Shaw 对于周边环境的视觉信息，建立一种时刻的拼接。真正的主题是一系列的细节表象：闪耀的广告灯，悬挂的电线，坍塌的道路，流浪狗，砖堆，成堆的垃圾和行人。这些细节都是整个费家村生存体验的视觉标识。

对于费家村里的外来农村人来说，住在这里即是一种机会又是一种边缘化的体验。对于许多人来说，搬进费家村里给他们提供了开小店做生意，找个体面的工作或者更优质生活的机会。然而，在与一些店主和村民详谈后，我们发现极少的人愿意永久地住在费家村或是北京。事实上，最终回到故乡是每个人唯一的实际打算。

虽然费家村被视为一个临时的目的地，多数移民仍然只关注于自身的现实状况。费家村并不是每个人计划和愿望的基础，但目前人们仍旧设法保证自身的生活安稳。Shaw 的作品准确的描绘出这一点：他绘出一个没有明确未来和目的的费家村。他关注于现实的情形，而不过分强调它的不确定性和不稳定性。艺术家和村民都在自身生活体验中成功地创造出一种反实质的可靠稳定状态。对于艺术家来说，是通过绘画。对于村民来说，是费家村本身。

**EMMA F. KARASZ** 于 2012 年移居北京，并于 2013 年至 2015 年担任红门国际驻地项目总监。她负责编辑和管理多学科的双语在线杂志“流泥”。

**NICHOLAS A.B. CHAR** 是一位现居北京的青年研究者。2014 年至 2015 年，在他的“社会流动性之移民小企业家”主题研究中，他对费家村做了实地调查。他于 2015 年毕业于北京师范大学社会发展与公共政策专业，获得硕士学位。

<sup>1</sup>费家村从字面上暗喻着：一个最初由费姓家族聚居并扩展的农牧业乡村。

<sup>2</sup>自从 70 年代末改革开放以来，中国的城市化从 17% 剧变为 55%。费家村的激化转变正是由于几百农村移民移居到中国快速发展膨胀的城市北京，以寻求更好的经济利益。















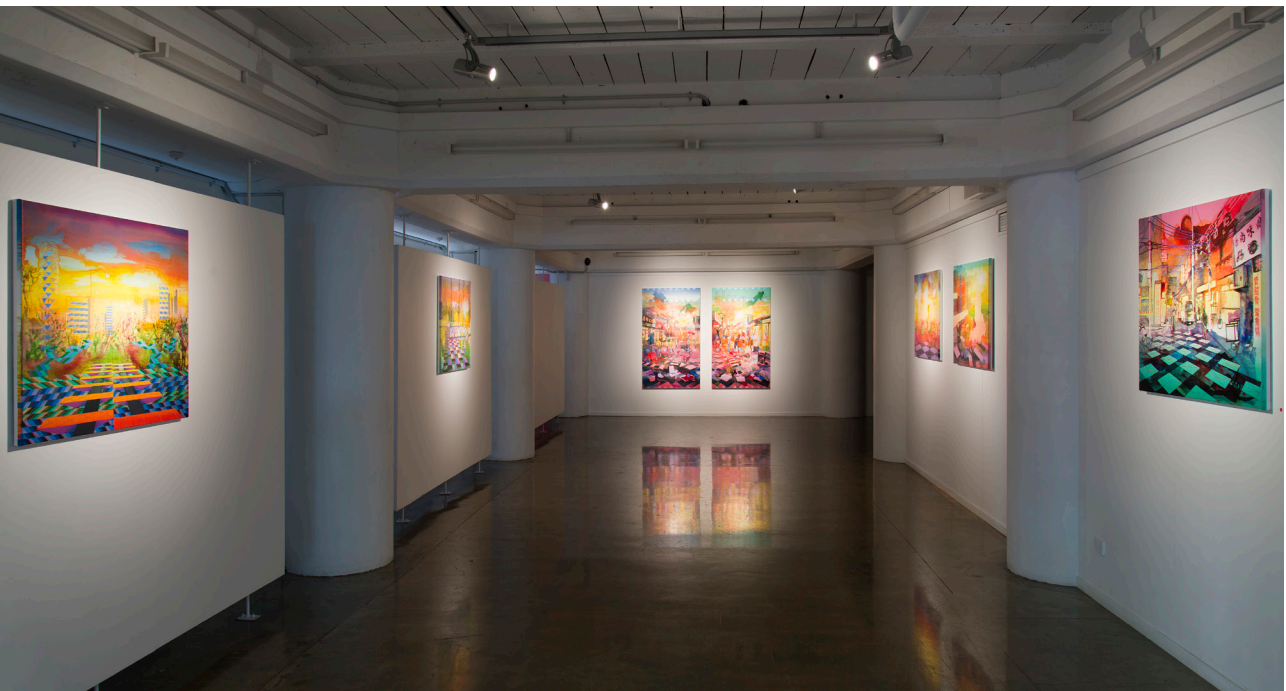




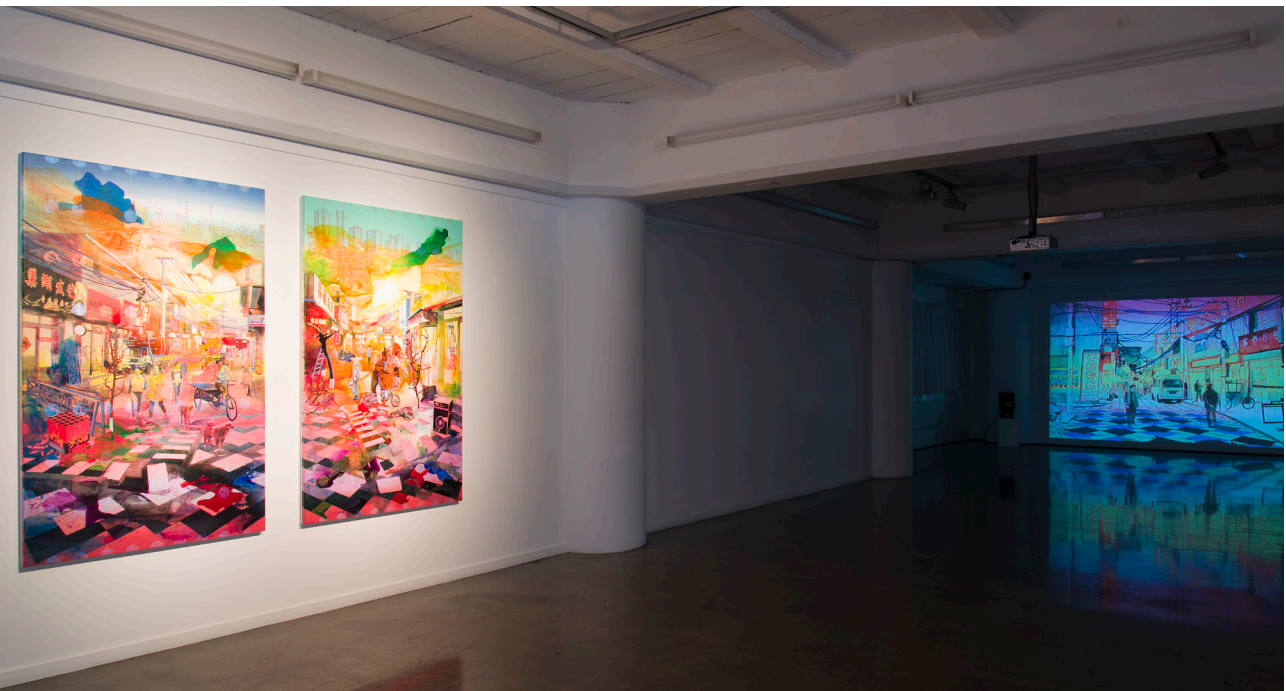
















I've been introduced to many cities via motorway. To me, it always feels like the driver's going a little too fast, the vehicle moving with a buoyancy kept afloat by anticipation. It's a one-way passage – at the end you're spat out as someone who seen a little more than they had before. Bevan Shaw's *Breathing in Beijing* is a journey to the centre, and outwards again. Three months unfold within this five minute video, a layering of time that sees things simultaneously slowed down and happening too fast. An electroacoustic composition by Carolyn Ayson shimmers in stereo, this cosmic twinkle accompanied by colours of eye watering, sherbet intensity.

*Breathing in Beijing* fizzles with the constant surface transformations that characterise Beijing; a city entirely man-made in one way or another. Bevan here, plays out this process as a painter; the surfaces of his paintings fluctuating with detail, colour, and texture. Movement and change occur in these fluctuations, and through the sound samples that Bevan captured while resident in Beijing. As with paint, the application of these sounds describes the surfaces of the city. With the sound of sweeping, comes the memory of dusky blue worksuits and brooms of bundled sticks. When a woman sings, I remember the karaoke in the parks.

In the city, things are wrapped and unwrapped – a bamboo scaffold takes the form of a high-rise, then is peeled away to reveal a new building. On the paintings' surfaces, fine red grids visualise, for brief moments, the underlying structures of an overwhelming city where chaos adheres to a strong sense of order. And eventually, the rhythm is found.

One rhythm is the design of the city itself. Five ring roads circle the Forbidden City, and the pattern of life shifts as one moves outwards in the stop-start of traffic, passing the first, second, third... Another is the steady cycle of foreigners who arrive to make art at the Red Gate Residency, somewhere just beyond the fifth ring road. This is where Bevan spent three months: becoming attuned to the unfamiliar, collecting sounds and pushing pigment.

In this city, it feels as though atoms are being constantly pushed around. In the man-made capital materials shift from one form into another, volumes move from one place to another, people are displaced and pushed to other locations. The hill that overlooks the Forbidden City looks natural, but was long ago formed from the earth excavated to make the Forbidden City moat. Things are disassembled, deconstructed, reconstructed – with low rents comes low risk, new businesses can appear and disappear in a neighbourhood in the space of a month.

*Breathing in Beijing* follows the changing rhythms of the city, it tries to keep pace. The internal forces of the city both hold things together and keep things apart. Domestic migrants from smaller cities, towns, and villages are kept on the fringes of Beijing, beyond the fifth ring road. These are the communities that neighbour the Red Gate residence; workers and families drawn to the city seeking opportunity, but kept bounded by the city's rhythms – the social and financial realities that trickle down from all that city planning.

The visitor, the artist, the resident; we all submit to the rhythms. Each of our passages through the city yields to the collective movements of Beijing. *Breathing in Beijing* yields too, to capture texture, transformation, colour and sound, and present them with a velocity that pays homage to the city itself.

**EMMA NG** is the Curator/Manager of Enjoy Public Art Gallery, an independent contemporary art space in Wellington. The Asia New Zealand Foundation in association with Creative New Zealand selected Emma to participate in a curator's tour of Japan and China in August 2015.

**HU XINRU** is the co-ordinator at Red Gate Residency in Beijing. She graduated from China Central Academy of Fine Arts with an Art History major in 2015. She translated this catalogue from English to Mandarin.

我经常在高速公路上听人们介绍一个城市。对我而言，总感觉司机开的太快，飞驰的车子伴着期待而漂浮着。这是一个单向路线——最后下车时好像比别人看到了更多一点的风景。Bevan Shaw 的作品“呼吸北京”是一次驶入中心后又驶向外的旅程。三个月的驻地时间在这个 5 分钟的视频中展开，在这层时间中事物同时放缓而又加速。由 Carolyn Ayson 制作的立体电声配乐跳跃不停，这个广泛的瞬间伴随着眼花缭乱，缤纷绚烂。

“呼吸北京”运用不断的平面转换来描绘北京：一个以某种方式而完全人造形成的城市。Bevan 从画家的角度演绎出这一过程，在他的画作表面，细节、色彩和材质参差波动。运动和变幻在这种起伏中通过声音显现出来，这些声音样本是由 Bevan 于北京驻留期间采集的。与绘画一般，这些声音的运用也在诉说这个城市的方方面面。伴随着扫地的声音而浮现的是灰蓝色的工作服和用树枝捆绑成的扫帚。听到一个女人的歌声，就仿佛看到了公园里面的卡拉 OK。

在城市里，事物都被包裹覆盖而又舒展——一个竹制的脚手架建立起一个高层结构，随后又从中剥离出一个崭新的建筑。在这些作品的表面，红色的细网格暗合着一个巨大城市下潜在的结构，在短暂的瞬间显现出一个强大秩序下的杂乱无章。最终，节奏被建立起来。

节奏是这个城市本身的设计。五环公路围绕着故宫，在时好时坏的交通状况下穿过一环，二环，三环……往城外走，人们的生活模式也会相应改变。另一种模式是从外国来到中国的红门驻地艺术家的稳定圈子，位于五环外的边上。Bevan Shaw 在这里渡过了三个月的驻留时光：逐渐适应陌生事物，收集声音样本以及挥毫泼墨。

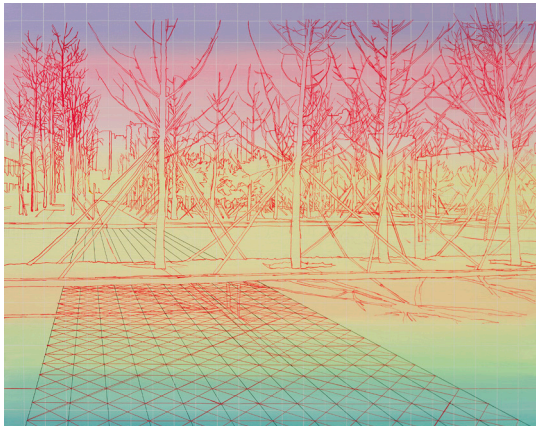
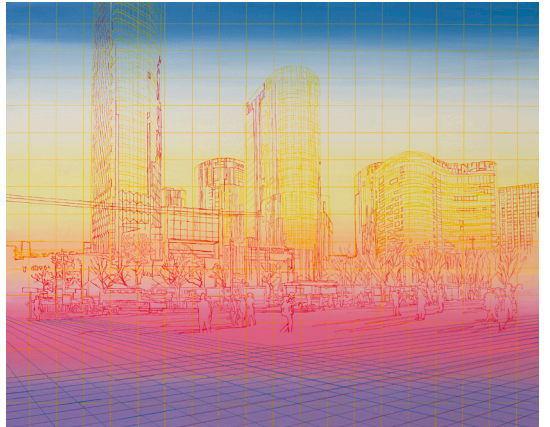
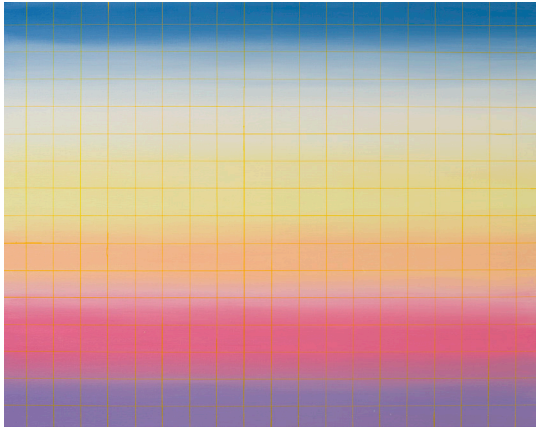
城市里，仿佛微量原子被不断推散开来。在这座人造首都中，材料从一种形式变成另一种，声音从一个地点转移到另一个地点，人们被迫从一个区域搬移至另一个区域。从景山公园上可以自然地鸟瞰故宫，但在古时是作为故宫的防御而被开凿出来。事物被拆分，解构，重建——低租金带来低风险，在这个地区新的商业会在一个月内出现而又消失。

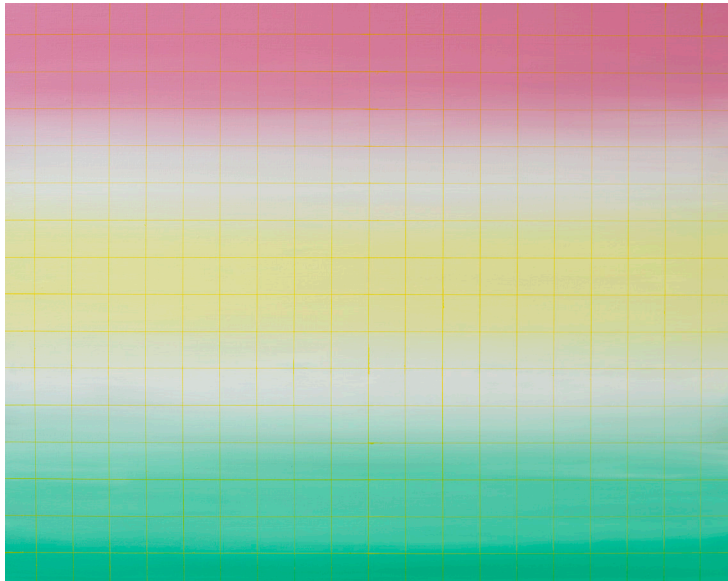
“呼吸北京”遵循并努力追赶着这个城市的节奏。城市的内部力量既合并事物又将事物拆解开来。家族移民从小城市，小乡村来到北京五环外的边缘地区，而这些社区里也居住着红门驻地项目艺术家。民工和家族被吸引至这个城市来寻求机遇，但也受制于城市的节奏——从城市规划中渗透下来的社会和经济现实。

不论游客，艺术家还是居民，我们都服从于这种节奏。北京城市中每一条道路都受到整体运转的制约。“呼吸北京”也受制于材质，转变，色彩和声音捕捉，而后以高速状态呈现，向城市本身致敬。

**EMMA NG** 是惠灵顿当代独立艺术空间“享受公共艺术画廊”的策展人和经纪人，新西兰亚洲基金会和创  
新纽西兰合作推选她于 2015 年 8 月对中国和日本进行策展访问。

**胡欣茹**是红门国际驻地项目协调人。她于 2015 年毕业于中国中央美术学院美术史专业。此文由她从英文翻  
译至中文。









## Works List 作品目录

- P9 *Village 村子*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 800 x 1000 mm
- P10 *Construction 工地*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 800 x 1000 mm
- P11 *Development 发展*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 800 x 1000 mm
- P12 *North Gate 北门* (left panel), 2015, acrylic on canvas, 1600 x 1000 mm
- P13 *North Gate 北门* (right panel), 2015, acrylic on canvas, 1600 x 1000 mm
- P14 *Footbridge 立交桥*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 800 x 1000 mm
- P15 *Park 公园*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 800 x 1000 mm
- P16, 17, 24 Installation images from the exhibition *Breathing in Beijing 呼吸北京*, Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington. Images courtesy of the artist Bevan Shaw.
- P22, 23 Video stills from *Breathing in Beijing 呼吸北京*, 2015, digital video, duration 05:19 minutes, music by Carolyn Ayson.



## Biography 个人简介

Bevan Shaw (born Auckland 1982) lives and works in Wellington, New Zealand. In 2015 he completed an artist residency at Red Gate Gallery, Beijing, China from March 1 - May 29. The paintings and sound recordings made during the residency became part of the exhibition *Breathing in Beijing* 呼吸北京 which was held at Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand from October 3 - 24, 2015.

Bevan Shaw (于 1982 年生于奥克兰) 现居住和工作于新西兰惠灵顿。2015 年 3 月 1 日至 5 月 29 日, 他完成了于中国北京的红门国际驻地项目。2015 年 10 月 3 日至 24 日, 这些于北京制作采集完成的作品以及录音作为展览“呼吸北京”的一部分展出于新西兰惠灵顿 Toi Pōneke 画廊。

This catalogue was produced on the occasion of a second exhibition of *Breathing in Beijing* 呼吸北京 at the Wallace Gallery Morrinsville, August 6 - 28, 2016.

此目录编辑于“呼吸北京”第二次展览之际, 展期为 2016 年 8 月 6 日至 28 日, 展场为位于莫林斯维尔的华莱士画廊。

**bevanshaw.co.nz**



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