

## Translation and Transculturality in Contemporary Chinese Art: A Case Study of Gu Wenda's 'Forest of Stone Steles' and 'United Nations: Temple of Heaven'

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**Abstract :** Translation has been elevated to one of the key notions in contemporary cultural discourse for a wide range of fields. It focuses not only on communication or transmission of meaning between different languages, but also on ways in which the very act of translation can be understood as a metaphor for cultural process. In recent years, the notion of translation is employed by some contemporary Chinese artists in a conceptual way, whose works contribute to constructing/deconstructing global/local cultural discourse and their own cultural identities. This study examines two artworks by contemporary Chinese artist Gu Wenda from a translational perspective, namely Forest of Stone Steles - Retranslation & Rewriting of Tang Poetry and United Nations - China Monument: Temple of Heaven, aiming to broaden the scope of Translation Studies to investigate visual culture and enrich methodological approach to contemporary Chinese art. Focusing on the relationship between translation, visibility and materiality in these two works, this study explores the nature of translation as part of the production of cultural discourse in the age of globalization as well as a way of establishing cultural identity. Gu Wenda, one of the most prestigious artists in contemporary China, is considered a pioneer in '85 Art Movement of China, and thereafter he went abroad for his artistic pursuits. His transnational experience enriches his cultural identity and the underlying discourse constructed/deconstructed in many of his works. In the two works already mentioned, the concept of translation is deployed by Gu Wenda on both linguistic level and metaphorical level for artistic expression. These two works produce discourses in which the artist's perception of cultural identity in a transnational context is articulated by the tension between source text and target text. Based on the conceptual framework of cultural identity proposed by Stuart Hall, analyses of Gu Wenda's cultural identity revealed through translation in these two works are centred on two axes, i.e., the axis of similarity and continuity with Chinese intellectual culture and the axis of difference and rupture with it, and the dialogic relationship between these two vectors. It argues that besides serving as a means of constructing visibility in the two works, translation metaphorizes Gu Wenda's journey from overcoming his cultural identity anxiety to re-establishing a transcultural identity embedded in the underlying discourse.

**Keywords :** contemporary Chinese art, cultural identity, transculturality, translation

**Conference Title :** ICIT 2018 : International Conference on Interpreting and Translation

**Conference Location :** Copenhagen, Denmark

**Conference Dates :** June 11-12, 2018