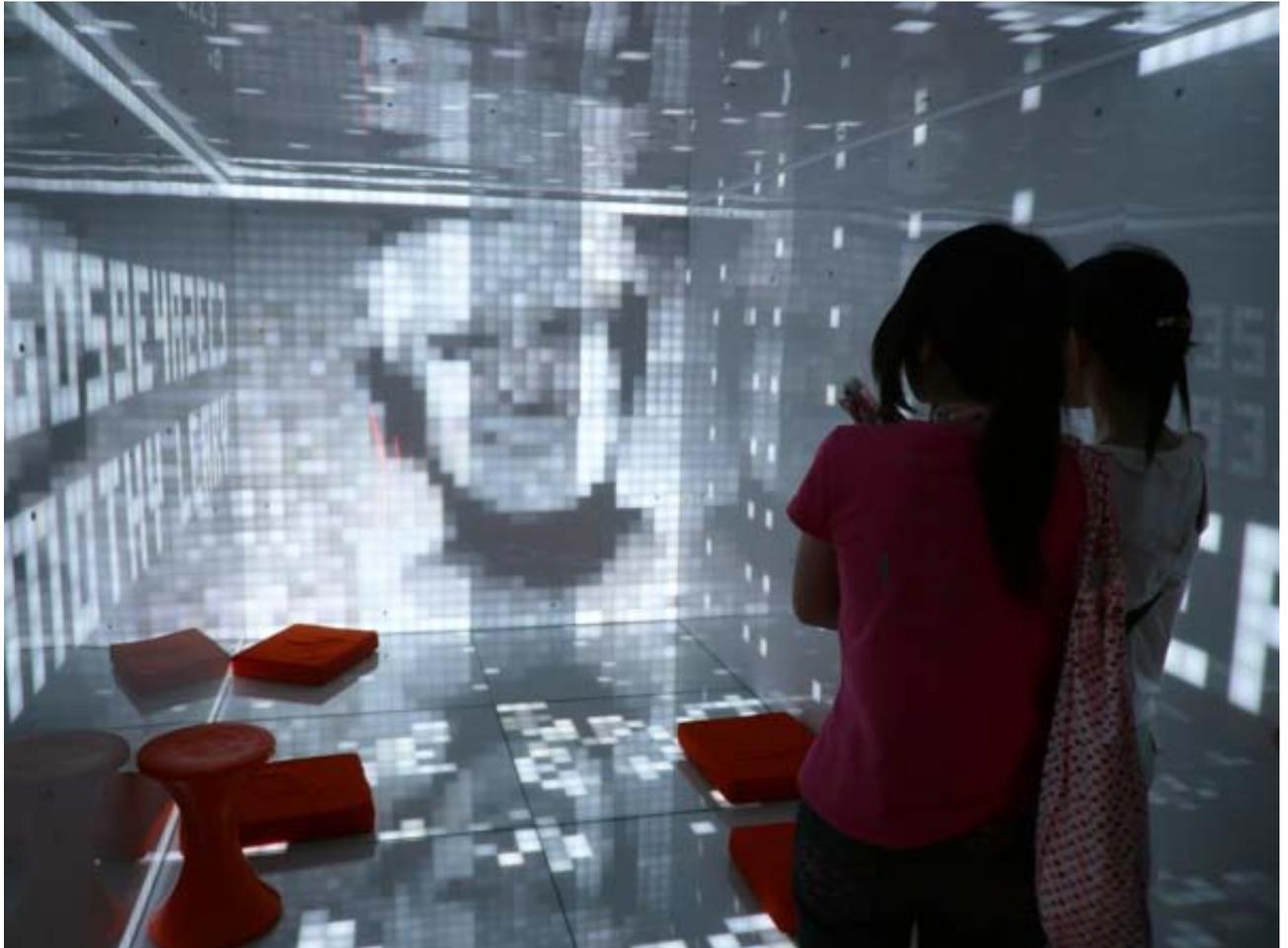


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«Swiss Chinese Cultural Explorations»

Final Report (Implementation in China)



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1. Summary

Economic and diplomatic ties have been in existence between Switzerland and the People's Republic of China for 60 years. In the last few years, various projects of a pioneering nature have also been realised within the field of contemporary art. With the «Swiss Chinese Cultural Explorations» programme, Pro Helvetia aimed at further developing long-term relationships between Switzerland and China on a cultural level. With the help of the programme, a sustainable network and long-term relationships between artists of both countries was to be established that would facilitate dialogue on a par. In order to achieve this goal, Pro Helvetia decided to support «official» as well as «informal» encounters between artists from both countries, and to specifically find and promote co-productions in the field of contemporary culture. The reciprocation of learning and know-how regarding Chinese art was to be guaranteed in Switzerland. Moreover, in line with the Board of Trustees' overseas strategy approved in 2004, which foresaw an emphasis on Asia, the opening of a liaison office in China was to be considered subsequent to the opening of the liaison office in India.

1.1 Most important results

- The programme could be carried out according to plan.
- A total of 500 artists from both countries collaborated.
- Artistic elements were sounded out in 182 performances, exhibitions, round tables, workshops, etc.
- Media response in China was extremely high, last but not least due to third-party funding for PR.
- The budget was met.
- Strategic goals were achieved: new partners interested in long-term cooperation could be elicited; additional access to both countries' cultural markets for artists from both countries could be facilitated; reciprocation of learning and know-how in Switzerland could be ensured; the commitment of Pro Helvetia with regard to foreign cultures has become visible in both Switzerland and China.
- Pro Helvetia opened its liaison office in Shanghai on 15 October 2010.

1.2 Overall assessment

- The concluding reports of all artists and partners, as well as event assessments and the local team's concluding report were made available and could all be evaluated. The most important results have been incorporated into this final report.
- The results, know-how and networks can be passed on to future partners via the specialist departments of Pro Helvetia.
- The programme's sustainability is ensured by the liaison office run by the local team who, with their know-how and contacts will continue to be available to artists as contact partners, acting as door-openers and trouble shooters.
- The Chinese authorities expressed great interest in the promotional policy of the Swiss Arts Council, which was substantiated by a total of seven visits by official Chinese delegations organised by Pro Helvetia between 2008 and 2010.

1.3 Cultural challenges

In contrast to Switzerland, art is heavily commercialised in China, with the watchwords being «Creative Industry». Art is also readily used as an advertising means for own purposes by those involved in politics. Openings and premieres are staged as spectacular and massive «shows». Art has to be geared to the masses, which is a fact we first had to get accustomed to. Harmonious music, highly athletic performances (acrobatics), entertaining boulevard theatre, as well as cultural and architectural biennials attract huge audiences. On the whole, elitism, the expression of one's own creativity and individualism are negatively looked

upon in China. A collective approach is and has been the primary focus and topics such as one's own individuality and self-expression have only been discovered in the last few years.

In the beginning, we experienced a lot of difficulties with the indirect, circular way in which the Chinese communicate, in order not to lose face, or embarrass the other party. The criticism and reflection of art is non-debateable – at least, not in official circles. At press conferences, it is common to hand journalists a «red envelope» with cash. Pro Helvetia, as an official Swiss organisation never made use of this practice. As an alternative, small PR gifts were distributed.

In the long run, it was the professionalism of partners and the support of our team in situ that would determine whether a project could be successfully carried out or not. In China, relationships and key personal contacts are nurtured as unique precious stones. A return service is expected in every case. These cultural differences, the language barriers, the complexity of individual projects, the many diverse partners in all disciplines, the vast geographical distances and the immense expectations on the part of Switzerland – which were very often not comprehensible to the Chinese partners – required those involved to employ a great deal of dedication and persuasive tactics.

1.4 Strategic recommendations

- The call for projects proved to be a successful instrument for finding new partners interested in realising Swiss-Chinese cooperation projects with performances in both countries.
- Consistent emphasis regarding the interest in long-term cooperation is worthwhile and has a positive effect when it comes to greater commitment – also financially – on the part of the Chinese.
- Cooperation with universities has a lot of potential, particularly with regard to «Electronic Arts», literature and design.
- Visits by official delegations in both directions serve to strengthen relations and the understanding of differences in the promotion of culture.

2. The programme

2.1 Brief description

With a budget of CHF 3.6 million and approximately 60 projects realised in China, «Swiss Chinese Cultural Explorations» has been the largest overseas programme ever launched by Pro Helvetia. It kicked off in China in June 2008 and ended in December 2010, with a reciprocation of 20 projects realised within the framework of the programme and the festival CULTURESCAPES at various venues in Switzerland. Through this programme, Pro Helvetia has created an environment in which to get a foothold in China's booming, contemporary cultural scene, and establish a network with organisers and artists. Within the framework of the programme, China and Switzerland have grown closer together on a cultural level and numerous relationships between artists and institutions of both countries have been set up. Furthermore, new and independent areas could be tapped and supported in their aims to generate alternative perspectives and approaches. In the process, issues were raised regarding cultural proximity or distance, as well as the successful or unsuccessful translation of culture – topics which Pro Helvetia dedicated a panel discussion to, as a conclusion to the programme in autumn 2010. All in all, 509 artists were involved in the programme – 291 from Switzerland and 218 from China.

2.2 Starting point

The programme came about within the framework of the overseas strategy that was approved by the Board of Trustees in 2004, whose guidelines were to focus on Asia for the period 2008-2011. The programme's strategic goals were geared to the principles concerning an exchange with Asia as established by Pro Helvetia. As a consequence, a string of programme-specific objectives ensued:

- Representation: Perception of Switzerland and its cultural diversity
 - Creating Switzerland's cultural appearance in China in cooperation with FDFA and Presence Switzerland
 - Perception of Pro Helvetia and its leading role in the cultural exchange with China and in cultural mediation

- Dissemination: Long-term strengthening of relations between Swiss artists and Chinese organisers/producers
 - Opening up new foreign markets for Swiss artists in China
 - Establishing long-term partnerships with Chinese organisers/producers
 - Mediating suitable Swiss contact partners for Chinese productions

- Learning: Intercultural exchange between China and Switzerland
 - Generating «Open Spaces» for the exchange of know-how and experience
 - Implementing Swiss-Chinese co-productions to be shown in both countries wherever possible
 - Reciprocating cultural know-how in China in the shape of events, workshops, etc.

- Consolidating: Promotion of cooperation and co-productions
 - Focusing on a few, high-quality projects, accompanied by introductions, workshops and discussion rounds
 - Achieving sustainability through follow-up projects

2.3 Partners

Pro Helvetia was by no means alone with «Swiss Chinese Cultural Explorations» whilst on the move in China: the Swiss government – under the aegis of Presence Switzerland – also planned to focus on China through the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008 and EXPO 2010 in Shanghai, which consequently brought about a number of synergies and facilitated cooperation with the Swiss authorities. Moreover, Pro Helvetia nurtured contacts to important Chinese experts in Switzerland, who were able to open doors in China and to help – particularly during the concept phase – identify the opportunities and risks of such a programme in an environment totally new to Pro Helvetia. These experts included: Wei Zhang (author), Dr. Uli Sigg (collector of contemporary Chinese art), Dr. Thomas Wagner (President Swiss-Chinese Society), Zhang Ga (curator), Ping-kwan Leung (author and professor at a university in Hong Kong), Prof. Andrea Riemenschneider (Director of the East Asia Institute at the University of Zurich), Xenia Piech (curator and journalist Beijing).

The Chinese Embassy in Berne, the General Consulate of China in Zurich, the Chinese Ministry of Culture, the Swiss Representative Offices (FDFA/Presence Switzerland) in Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Hong Kong, as well as swissnex Shanghai all supported the programme as official partners with their know-how, contacts and additional resources – both financially and with personnel.

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2.4 Content

«Swiss Chinese Cultural Explorations» was divided into five theme blocks. By dividing the themes into blocks, it ensured that this multi-disciplinary programme – comprising numerous vessels (exhibitions, concerts, master classes, presentations, workshops, panel discussions, club events, VIP events, etc.) – was perceived externally as a single unit and as a topically attractive programme, despite its diversity. Moreover, these theme blocks facilitated communication.

2.4.1 «Electronic Arts – Unstable Arts»

The objective of «Electronic Arts» – the programme's focal point – was to establish sustainable networks between innovative partners who work at the interface between art and technology, and provide artists with a great amount of creative freedom and development potential.

2.4.2 «Connecting Words»

«Connecting Words» facilitated translation of Swiss authors into Chinese and exchange between authors and artists from both countries. In addition, exchange through visualisation and comparative studies of symbols in public areas was encouraged. Thus, Pro Helvetia pursued the aim to overcome language barriers and bring both cultures closer together.

2.4.3 «Exploring the Sources: Abroad»

Within the framework of «Abroad», overseas Chinese functioned as bridge builders whose goals were to gauge the common ground as well as differences of both cultures.

2.4.4 «Exploring the Sources: Tradition»

The objectives of «Traditions» were to demonstrate similarities and differences by contrasting the traditions of both countries on the one hand, and to create something new on the other.

2.4.5 «Looking both Ways»

China and Switzerland have enjoyed good relations since 1950. The aim of «Looking both Ways» was to intensify dialogue on a cultural level, too. Pro Helvetia sought out and supported platforms for the export of Swiss art to China, as well as for the import of Chinese art to Switzerland. Furthermore, the Council specifically promoted co-productions involving artists from both countries in order to intensify dialogue and to establish sustainable partnerships.

3. Programme development

3.1 Project organisation

The project team in Zurich recruited a local team and prepared the infrastructure in Beijing and Shanghai. The project team launched the «Call for Projects» with a Swiss-Chinese jury and ensured that the selected projects conformed to Pro Helvetia criteria. The teams in both countries were responsible for the management of the entire programme and they took on the role of facilitators for the artists and organisers. They ensured that individual aspects of the programme featured in Pro Helvetia's overall communication as well as in the «Switzerland in China» campaign. The members of the project team and the numerous internal as well as external specialists who collaborated on the programme are listed at the end of the report.

3.2 Concept phase

The differentiation between «official» and «informal» was incorporated and consolidated as a fundamental element in the programme concept in cooperating with China. On the one hand, the programme was to contain just a few prestigious acts that would satisfy Chinese and Swiss authorities when it came to size and «quality». Therefore, only the best that Switzerland has to offer came into question as the presence of Swiss and Chinese officials was both necessary and desired. Thanks to the energetic support of the FDFA and Presence Switzerland, these representational occasions worked out extremely well. At an «informal» level, it was about finding «open spaces» for exchange that could be realised with as little assistance at an official level as far as possible (e.g. at universities, in clubs, and at festivals). This was where the emphasis of the programme lay, and direct contacts were necessary in order to realise it.

3.3 Setting up the team in China

Personal contacts are of particular importance in China and they have to be nurtured. In the field of contemporary art and culture, extremely important and innovative developments are currently taking place. For this reason, Pro Helvetia decided to recruit staff to work in both metropolises, who would be familiar with local conditions, would take on the role of programme mediators, and who would promote establishing long-term relations. The Swiss Embassy in Beijing, the General Consulate, as well as swissnex in Shanghai all provided valuable support in recruiting the team. The local team took on a key role as project coordinator in situ on the one hand, and as bridge builder between both cultures on the other. They translated for the partners, mediated during times of conflict, brought in their own networks and contacts, and – thanks to careful monitoring of the local scenes – could react quickly to the unexpected and to new developments. Included in their duties, was to transparently communicate the interests of Pro Helvetia to Chinese partners, particularly concerning the expectation that the Chinese would contribute financially to these projects.

3.4 Call for projects

At the beginning of 2008, the call for projects for the programme with China was launched in order to gain exchange projects in all disciplines from artists from both countries. The new application portal of the Swiss Arts Council – www.myprohelvetia.ch – was used for the first time for the call for projects. An invitation from a Chinese organiser/producer was the proviso for taking part in the call for projects, and furthermore, the Chinese party had to participate financially in the project, as well as to be responsible for organising any necessary permits. A total of 117 projects were received from all the different language regions of Switzerland and from abroad. The Swiss-Chinese jury comprised seven members: Carine Zuber (Chair as Pro Helvetia Member of Board of Trustees), Cäsar Menz (Member of Board of Trustees), Dr. Muhai Tang (Conductor Zurich Chamber Orchestra), Dr. Thomas Wagner (President Swiss-Chinese Association), Carol Lu (journalist), Dr. Cai Tianxin (author), Carena Schlewitt (Artistic Director Kaserne Basle). In August 2008, the jury decided in favour of the following projects: «Sonic Calligraphy», «Back to the Future», «Symphonic Concert of Chinese and Swiss Composers», «Trois femmes», «La cérémonie – A Ghost Train», «Foodscape», «The Mystery», «Multilingual Typography» and «Overseas».

3.5 Risk tool and reserve budget

In order to minimise the risks that arise when entering new territory and working with new partners, the China team developed a risk tool at the request of the Board of Trustees. It basically dealt with the responsibilities of participating partners in the programme and the approach to censorship. In addition, it contained a checklist for examining the feasibility of each individual project according to specific criteria (e.g. a realistic budget, reputation of Chinese partner, availability of expert translators, or the potential for political risks). Furthermore, a reserve budget was set up for the unexpected or for short-notice projects.

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3.6 Communication

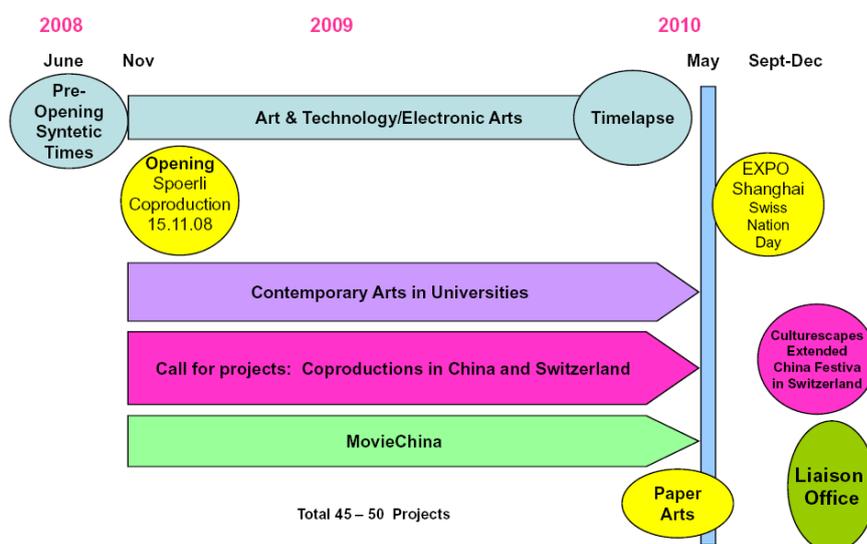
China is developing at an extremely dynamic rate and in this context it is common to work at very short notice. The test projects showed that short-notice programme changes in China are the norm and present a huge challenge when it comes to communication. In order to be able to respond quickly to short-notice changes, Pro Helvetia opted for an own website in English and in Chinese as its main communication tool in China (www.prohelvetia.cn). In addition, a flyer was produced in Chinese outlining the work of Pro Helvetia. Furthermore, video clips were produced, postcards printed and a pocket-sized programme booklet was published in English and Chinese. This booklet helped to attract attention to the individual projects via website links and to provide orientation regarding this comprehensive programme. For the larger events in China, Pro Helvetia – along with Presence Switzerland and Chinese partners – organised press conferences and VIP events. PR for all the other projects was the responsibility of the Chinese partners, and was partly supported by the local Pro Helvetia team.

3.7 Content adaptations

The rolling planning of the programme required some directional amendments and adaptation even during the concept phase:

- Residencies
The «Dialogues/Visiting Artists» project aimed at achieving the prerequisites for dialogue and for setting up contacts through Swiss artists residing in China. However, the outlay for such a relatively small number of projects would have been disproportionately high. Therefore, the residencies were not implemented as a stand-alone project strand; instead, they were integrated as part of the existing programme focal point.
- Reciprocation in Switzerland and cooperation with CULTURESCAPES
The «China Window Switzerland», which was listed in the concept, could be effectively promoted and expanded through cooperation with the CULTURESCAPES Festival in autumn 2010. As a consequence, the programme strand was extended by six months to the end of 2010.

4. Implementation/Achieving Operational Targets



4.1 Opening in Beijing

The prospect of supporting Swiss media artists participating in the international «Synthetic Times» exhibition at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing already in June 2008, was too good an opportunity to miss, and we subsequently defined the event as a pre-opener. The curator of the exhibition, Zhang Ga, invited the following Swiss artists: etoy, Yves Netzhammer, Knowbotic Research and Jeffrey Huang. The exhibition and the «Swiss Night» were very positively received by the official partners (Chinese Ministry of Culture and EDA/Presence Switzerland) and also received generous financial support. This positive cooperation paved the way for subsequent representational events. «Synthetic Times» was one of the programme's highlights: from 09 June to 03 July 2008, the exhibition registered a total of 100,000 visitors and achieved phenomenal media resonance with more than 100 media reports, presence on innumerable websites, and radio and television coverage in China. The project posed a challenge for participating Swiss artists, particularly with regard to technical equipment, quality and safety standards. However, it was possible to overcome most hurdles due to good organisational work in the run up on behalf of the Swiss partner – plug.in – and the local translators' immense commitment.

4.2 Opening in Shanghai

The Opening of the «Swiss Chinese Cultural Explorations» programme took place on 15/16 November 2008, at the Shanghai International Performing Arts Festival. A co-production of «A Midsummer Night's Dream» by the Spoerli Ballet, the Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra and the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre was performed as a representational act. The Grand Theatre Shanghai, which has a capacity of approx. 2000 seats, was filled twice over. More than 50 journalists attended the performances, 35 journalists held interviews with Heinz Spoerli and Pius Knüsel, and there were four television channel appearances. Most of the 167 reports were positive. A mixed audience responded differently to the production: whilst younger members of the audience were thrilled, the older generation expressed trouble at identifying with a very superior ballet combined with Chinese comedy – the craftsmen scene was integrated as theatre within theatre. The project was a huge challenge for the China team and participating artists, particularly as the festival lacked co-production experience at an international level, and as the project only had guest rights to perform at the Grand Theatre Shanghai.

4.3 Art & Technology/Electronic Arts (focal point)

The programme strand entitled «Art & Technology/Electronic Arts», directed by Marianne Burki, aimed at establishing a network and exchange of know-how between the experimentally-inclined scenes of both countries that are active in the fields of new media and electronic music. Exhibitions, workshops, panel discussions, club events, research and lecture tours took place in well-known places such as the National Art Museum of China in Beijing, and also in clubs, art colleges, festivals and universities (see separate final report).

4.4 Call for Projects (focal point)

All nine selected projects chosen from the call for projects could be realised and performed in China.

4.4.1 «Sonic Calligraphy»

The musical encounter «Sonic Calligraphy» excelled because of the good organisation and cooperation of the Chinese event organiser with the local Pro Helvetia team, and because of the extraordinary exchange which took place between the musicians of both countries. Audiences were excited when it came to the convergence of jazz and traditional Chinese instruments. A total of 800 visitors attended 4 concerts in Shanghai and Beijing, and an additional 100 took part in a workshop in Beijing. Another 10 concerts took place in Switzerland.

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4.4.2 «The Mystery»

«The Mystery» at the CCD Workstation had the benefit of a professional and committed partner at the highest of standards, who was personally very interested in the project and in cooperating with the Swiss performers. As the project was part of the Crossing Festival that took place in Beijing during the 60th Anniversary of the People's Republic of China, only insider circles could be wooed, despite which approx. 700 people came to the performances. In Switzerland, 7 performances took place.

4.4.3 «Overseas»

This interdisciplinary theatre/dance project took place in a traditional Chinese courtyard. A total of 18 performances took place in the courtyard and were well visited by the off scene. Further 7 performances took place in Switzerland.

4.4.4 «Back to the Future»

The concert series that the Nouvel Ensemble Contemporain NEC put together along with 3 Chinese soloists set new tones for both countries performing on traditional instruments. Composer Deqing Wen was responsible for the Chinese section of the programme and his coordination of the concerts and master class in China went smoothly. The Chinese public were immensely enthusiastic about the works by Ammann and Menoud, and in Switzerland there was thunderous applause for the pieces by Deqing Wen and Ammann. The concert in Switzerland took place within the framework of the NEC season, and the Corbak Festival (La Chaux-de-Milieu) was gained as a partner.

4.4.5 Symphonic Concert of Chinese and Swiss Composers

This concert series presented Swiss-Chinese compositions by three Chinese composers (Jian-Er Zhu, Liqing Yang, Musheng Chen) and three Swiss composers (Klaus Huber, Eric Gaudibert, Mathias Steinauer). Taking part were three soloists from Switzerland (Lingling Yu, Thomas Demenga, Jacqueline Ott) and two from China (Ya Dai, Chunyuan Chen). The concert and the master classes in China presented a few difficulties: as a result of flight delays due to the Icelandic volcanic eruption, the orchestra did not have sufficient time to rehearse and a Chinese composition was not finished on time. The concert at the Shanghai International Music Festival «Shanghai Spring» had around 800 visitors and contact to the festival management team could be reinforced.

4.4.6 «Trois Femmes»

This concert series comprising 10 concerts in China, presented 3 new compositions by Xu Yi and Katrin Frauchiger with a link to China, and was accompanied by concert introductions, lectures, master classes and round-table discussions. The composers and interpreters tackled intercultural topics in Switzerland and in China and researched their implementation in music. As a highlight for «Trois Femmes», the production was invited to the Lucerne Festival in September 2010. A total of 7 concerts took place in Switzerland and Europe.

4.4.7 «La Cérémonie – A Ghost Train»

The contextual starting point of «La Cérémonie» is a film by the same name by French director Claude Chabrol, in which a murder takes place whilst the family are watching a Peking opera on television. Moreover, 400asa traces violent rebellions in both countries, such as the Cultural Revolution and the opera house riot, which among others represent the insurgency of the youth against the rituals of a decadent society. The broad spectrum of the musical means adopted in the piece ranges from a commercial musical to a complex operatic adaptation. The film's music translates political issues into sensual entertainment. Taking part in the production directed by Samuel Schwarz were students of the HKB and the Central Academy of Drama/Beijing

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University of Theatre Research Institute, which created a demanding cooperation. In Switzerland, 7 performances took place.

4.4.8 «Foodscape»

This intercultural exchange project comprising authors, artists and publishers broached the subject of the history and culture of food. Four authors from all the regions of Switzerland (Vanni Bianconi, Arno Camenisch, Odile Cornuz, Peer Weber) and the photographer, Martin Zeller met four Chinese authors (Lo Kwai-Cheung, Yang Qian, Huang Lihai, Sou Vai Keng) and the artist, Xu Pei Wu, all from the metropolises of the southern Chinese Pearl River Delta – a region almost the same size as Switzerland that is also characterised by its multilingualism and diverse food culture. On each of these 14-day journeys through each partner's regions, the participants cooked together, took part in discussions and recorded their impressions in the form of literary texts, which were then presented to an attentive audience at readings and workshops. A fully illustrated book about the project was published with texts in Chinese, English, French and German, and was awarded «Best in the World Gourmand Award for Chinese Cuisine Book» in Paris in February 2010.

4.4.9 «Multilingual Typography»

This design project focused on the relatively new topic of «Multilingual Typography», which researches the co-existence of signs from different cultures and their effects on typography. The project was developed by Design2context (Institute for Design Research, Zurich University of the Arts) in cooperation with five Chinese universities. In workshops at the Chinese partner universities, the aim was to develop the basics for design practices that would realise the intertwining of two cultures on equal terms, enriching them both mutually and jointly.

4.5 «MovieChina»

The objective of «MovieChina» was to establish long-term relationships with professional partners in the film industry in order to attain an intensive exchange and to provide the Swiss film-making industry with a powerful platform. Cooperation with Pro Helvetia, Presence Switzerland and SWISS FILMS provided Swiss filmmakers with two opportunities to be present at the Shanghai International Film Festival (2008 and 2009) with representational appearances. Xavier Koller's participation as a judge at this international competition strengthened Switzerland's presence in 2009 even more. In addition, by means of workshops, the joint commitment of Pro Helvetia and SWISS FILMS provided participating documentary filmmakers with the opportunity to intensify exchange and to network with valuable contacts at an informal level. Partners for this purpose were the Caochangdi Workstation CCD in Beijing, which dedicated a platform for the promotion of documentary films, and the China Independent Film Festival in Nanjing. The Swiss documentary filmmakers' workshops, as well as the film screenings attracted a great deal of interest at both locations, creating intensive discussions that showed remarkable openness. «MovieChina» led to reciprocal events at 3 festivals in Switzerland.

4.6 «Contemporary arts at universities»

«Contemporary Arts at Universities» provided the framework for an in-depth exchange of quality and at a high standard. Numerous contributions from almost all disciplines in the shape of exhibitions, concerts, master classes, workshops, panel discussions and talks could be brought to the universities. The events consistently created a great amount of interest amongst the students, and the talks and workshops that were on offer particularly contributed to an intense exchange of knowledge.

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In the fields of literature and design in particular, the universities proved to be reliable and committed partners who expressed a great deal of interest in a professional exchange with Switzerland. So that, for example Prof. Chen Wei, Deacon of the German-speaking Department at Ningbo University, intends to align his institute, placing more emphasis on Switzerland and Swiss literature. Prof. Keith Chi-hang Tam, Head of the Visual Communications Department at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, aims to tackle typography exclusively from a multilingual perspective in future. In Switzerland, an exhibition and 5 workshops took place.

Lessons Learnt: Universities – not normally Pro Helvetia partners – provide interesting platforms for cultural exchange in China, as younger audiences tend to be more open to contemporary art. Furthermore, in order to carry out events at universities, permission from the Ministry of Culture is not necessary. Personal contacts and establishing trust are particularly important for successful cooperation with universities. The partners often lacked experience in project management, in public relations, and in exhibiting; disadvantages that all-in-all were tackled and outweighed by the amount of personal dedication and support of those around them.

4.7 World Exhibition EXPO 2010 – Better City, Better Life: The Swiss Pavilion

Presence Switzerland were in charge of project management at the Swiss Pavilion. Pro Helvetia was represented in the steering group. During the EXPO, Pro Helvetia took part in the Swiss Nation Day and in the Montreux Jazz Café. Switzerland presented itself with an interactive exhibition on the EXPO's sub-theme «rural-urban interaction», over an area of 4,000 square metres. The concept for the pavilion and the thematic exhibition was compiled by ARGE Buchner Bründler Architects and Element GmbH.

The exhibition concept broached the topic of the equilibrium between man, nature and technology. An abridged version of the original film entitled «The Alps» could be seen in the pavilion, specially adapted for the pavilion's huge screen. The film depicts the omnipresence of the Swiss mountains that – in addition to their beauty – also present a harsh and difficult habitat for people. Twelve life-size Swiss – male and female – appeared on screens before the visitors. They talked about their visions for the future, their expectations and their dreams. In this installation, the focus was on the good governance of mankind as a prerequisite for a healthy and sustainable future. The trip by chair lift (when operational) transported visitors from the weightiness of the city out to the lightness of nature, carrying them over a green meadow with plants and flowers on the pavilion's roof. And so, the pavilion brought the basic theme of sustainability and quality of life at EXPO 2010 to a logical and coherent conclusion. The trip lasted 4 minutes and was acoustically accompanied by a sound installation by Benedikt Schiefer. In cooperation with Presence Switzerland and Musique Suisse, Pro Helvetia produced a CD entitled «Music from the Swiss Mountains» as a gift and for sale in the pavilion shop.

4.7.1 Swiss Nation Day

Each country was officially welcomed by China to the World Exhibition. At the ceremony held on 12 August, the President of the Federation – Doris Leuthard – as well as a delegation of VIP business representatives and members of parliament took part. Pro Helvetia supported concerts by Symphony Orchestra Basle and Music for Strings Alder. A performance by Erika Stucky, which was financed by Pro Helvetia and Presence Switzerland, was heavily criticised by the parliamentarians and as a result, was published as a scandal by Blick using the headline «Dissolve Pro Helvetia!».

4.7.2 The Montreux Jazz Café in the Swiss Pavilion

The Montreux Jazz Café was present in the pavilion with «When Swiss Bands Meet Chinese Bands». The series comprising 12 performances by the groups Lucien Dubuis Trio, Fiona Daniel, Dog Almond and Trio Rusconi was supported by Pro Helvetia.

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4.7.3 The Cities Pavilion Geneva/Basle/Zurich

The cities pavilion focused entirely on water. On the occasion of the Basle/Zurich cultural week, which was held in Shanghai within the framework of the e-Arts Festival from 30 May to 06 June, Pro Helvetia supported the «Water Courseway» concert featuring Andreas Vollenweider.

4.8 Other projects

As there were specially-reserved means in the budget, a few additional projects could be brought into the programme at short notice before the start. These projects were applications made to Pro Helvetia that fulfilled the required criteria. The six projects were:

4.8.1 ArchScapes

This exhibition by the Swiss Architecture Museum, Basle was included at the initiative of the Swiss Embassy in Beijing and shown in the renowned Today's Art Museum in Beijing, as well as at the Architecture Biennale in the prosperous metropolitan city of Shenzhen in southern China. Public response and excellent media coverage were very gratifying.

4.8.2 Strapazin

A special edition of Swiss comics could be published in China in May 2010, thanks to an editor and artist in residence at the University in Nanjing. As a companion piece, the 100th edition of the periodical Strapazin – featuring Chinese comics – was published in Switzerland in September 2010.

4.8.3 Papercut

This very successful folk culture project displaying paper cuts was initiated by the Ernst Hohl Trust. The exhibition could be seen at the Haus Appenzell, as well as at the universities of Beijing and Hangzhou and was accompanied by workshops, presentations and musical performances. Both openings were organised in cooperation with Swiss representatives. Chinese media coverage was immense with hundreds of articles appearing in the press and on websites.

4.8.4 Mummenschanz

Wu Production organised the China tour of Mummenschanz. Pro Helvetia supported the project financially on the condition that workshops in theatre academies would be carried out so that doors could be opened for other productions. Chinese audiences responded positively and surprised as this kind of performance had never been seen in China before.

4.8.5 Swiss Chinese Literature Exchange

The project encompassed the translation and publication by the renowned Shanghai Translation Publishing House of a total of ten Swiss contemporary authors' works. The first four books by Hugo Lötscher, Monique Schwitter, Rolf Lappert and Peter Stamm were premiered this May in Shanghai, Ningbo and Hangzhou. With this project, a sustainable Swiss-Chinese cultural dialogue could be initiated that not only provided Chinese translators with a better understanding for Swiss culture and literature, but also allowed Swiss authors to catch a glimpse of Chinese culture and its literature scene.

4.8.6 Criss+Cross

This touring exhibition on Swiss everyday design travelled to China by arrangement of the Zurich University of the Arts, which has been in contact with Jiangnan University in Wuxi since 2004. «Criss+Cross» could be seen in a total of five locations in China – the last being the Swiss Pavilion at the EXPO in Shanghai – and because of

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media coverage and visitor response, was a highlight of the programme. Approximately 1,000 people took part at the opening and a total of 4,000 people visited the exhibition in Wuxi Museum, where it was a guest for just 2 weeks. Due to the exhibition's enormous success, it was subsequently shown for a good three weeks at the university. The exhibition was accompanied by a series of talks with Swiss designers (Roger Pfund, Ariana Pradal, Esther Brinkmann, among others) and by workshops, that generated very good feedback throughout with the lecturers and students at the host design and art schools. Jiangnan University, School of Design, was the project partner in situ and coordinated the onward tour of the exhibition to Nanjing, Guangzhou and Shanghai, and published a Chinese-English exhibition catalogue.

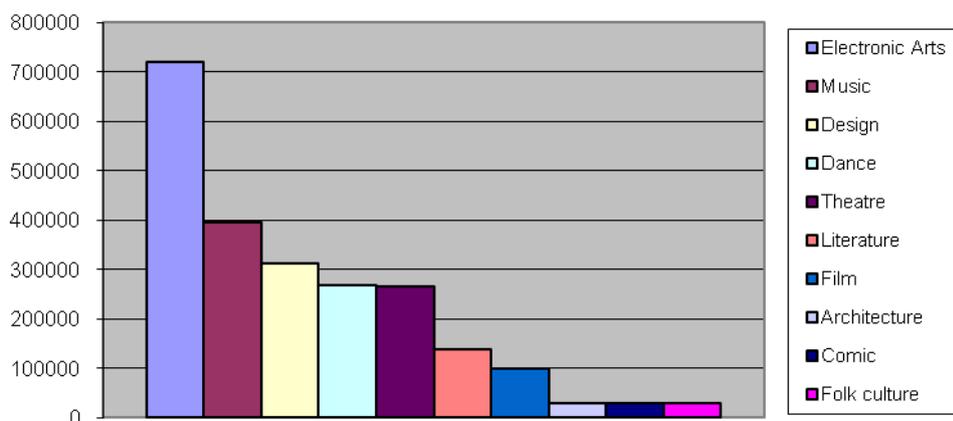
4.9 Programme deviations

Almost the entire programme could be carried out according to plan. The Chinese part of the programme could be concluded on time in June 2010. However, insecurities with regard to the feasibility of the projects because of political events (Tibet protests, festivities for the 60th Anniversary of the People's Republic of China) or other difficult to imagine hurdles on the part of the Chinese authorities, accompanied the programme, along with the fear of control and censorship. In fact, obtaining permits proved to be much more time-consuming than expected and could only be sorted out thanks to the know-how and energetic efforts of local partners. Restrictions, postponements, or even last-minute cancellations of events occurred less frequently than expected.

5. Finances

Pro Helvetia contributed CHF 3.6 million to the programme. Further CHF 300,000 were funded by Presence Switzerland and swissnex. The Chinese partners contributed 10 - 50% to the projects. Moreover, they made a considerable contribution to the CULTURESCAPES Festival. Three-quarters of Pro Helvetia funds and indeed 80% of the total resources have been used for projects. There is a remaining balance of CHF 500,000 thanks to increased partner contributions.

Contributions ordered by discipline in CHF



6. Recommendations

- **Call for projects**

The call for projects as a selection instrument proved to be doubly effective: on the one hand, partners could be found who already had relations with China and who could specifically support the projects that were in line with Pro Helvetia's aim to focus on cooperation and establishing long-term relationships; and on the other hand, it was generally appreciated that Pro Helvetia – by means of the call for projects – was able to open doors to a great extent and clearly signal their wish to be open for new partners. This has particularly been demonstrated by the extensive and positive feedback on the call for projects received from artists, partners in both countries, and politicians.
- **Cooperation with the Swiss authorities**

The programme team was extremely well supported by Presence Switzerland during the realisation phase of the representational events in China. The Swiss embassy and consulate made their know-how concerning visas and customs formalities readily available. Moreover, the Swiss authorities opened doors to the Chinese Ministry of Culture and other important institutions. Thanks to the outstanding cooperation with swissnex, significant synergies could be achieved especially at the interface between art and technology. There are common interests as swissnex nurtures relations to universities and places emphasis on innovative developments. Furthermore, swissnex organises its own events, which means that joint projects may also be realised in future (lectures, artist panels, additional appearances by Swiss artists). Pioneer projects at universities, such as «Artists in LABs», could only be carried out thanks to the know-how and contacts of swissnex in Shanghai.
- **Safeguarding the role of door opener**

Thanks to the careful set up of relations to official partners, Pro Helvetia was able to convince the Chinese Ministry of Culture not just to work together on a private festival in Switzerland, but to also make a substantial financial contribution.
- **Financial participation of partners**

The financial involvement of Chinese partners needed to be made clear, as the Chinese generally assume that the guest country covers the costs. And as the focus of Pro Helvetia was not just on exporting Swiss culture, but more on exchange and establishing long-term relationships, it was essential to win round the Chinese as partners from the beginning on.
- **Communication**

The key to success was almost always the use of good, professional and competent translations: in the written form for concluding contracts and for public relation purposes, or in the oral form for direct exchange with target groups, authorities, technicians or organisers.
- **Establishing contacts with art academies**

swissnex has access primarily to universities. Almost all over China, art academies are a separate entity and not part of scientific faculties. Pro Helvetia would need direct access to art academies and facilitate projects within this framework.
- **Prerequisites**

It is worthwhile planning in enough time when it comes to partner selection, getting to know each other, looking for expert translators, and for handling anything unforeseen that may arise. Dedicated

partners, having a contingency plan, perseverance, confidence and a great deal of flexibility are all very important prerequisites for a project's success in China.

- **Technology**
Prior clarification with professionals is very valuable and, depending on the project it pays to take along as much own equipment as possible. Most of the fine tuning has to be done by oneself on location.
- **Censorship and taboo topics**
A lot more is possible in China than we as outsiders assume. In order to make sure Chinese partners do not experience any problems, the following taboo topics should be kept in mind: the Falun Gong movement, Tibet and Uiguria, criticism aimed at the party or its members, the display of naked skin or sexual acts on stage.
- **Regional focus**
The Pearl River Delta and particularly the cities of Guangzhou and Shenzhen undergo a strong development and will be an interesting region for future projects.

7. Acknowledgements

As the report shows, 500 event organisers, specialists and artists in China and in Switzerland contributed to the collaboration and success of «Swiss Chinese Cultural Explorations». It would take too long to give credit to everyone by name. The entire China team thanks all partners in China and in Switzerland, the Board of Trustees, the Steering Committee and core group for their support and trust. The steamship «Explorations» was able to remain on course even during turbulent times and reach its destination thanks to careful governance.

Zurich, 17 January 2011

Angela Wettstein, Project Manager, Pro Helvetia

Tina Wodiunig, Office for Cultural Projects & Evaluation, Zurich

8. Credits

Project team	Tiina Huber, Aida Suljicic, Bettina Uhlmann (Stage Coach), Angela Wettstein
Concept and Final Report	Angela Wettstein, Tina Wodiunig
Coordination/Expertise in China	Cathy Fu, Cissy Sun, Sylvia Xu, Mia Yang
Communication	Claudine Chappuis, Sophie Lamparter, Janine Messerli, Sabina Schwarzenbach, Sylvia Xu
Translations	Carmen Coleman, Jsabel Menzi, Language Solutions (English), Jean- Jacques Furer (French), Antonella Piazza (Italian), Sylvia Xu, Mia Yang and Cathy Fu (Chinese)
Finances	Matthias Vater
Contracts + Management Instrument	Bettina Uhlmann (Stage Coach)