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The Museum of Modern Art

VIDEO INSTALLATION BY CELEBRATED CHINESE ARTIST ZHANG PEILI PRESENTED AT
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Eating

October 28, 1998-February 2, 1999
Garden Hall Video Gallery

The Museum of Modern Art presents a recent acquisition, the video sculpture *Eating* (1997) by Zhang Peili, one of China's leading media artists, from October 28, 1998, through February 2, 1999, in the Museum's Garden Hall Video Gallery.

Eating consists of three stacked monitors with different perspectives of the same activity. The top screen depicts a close-up of a masticating cheek, focusing on the jaw muscles as they tighten and relax. The bottom screen showcases various edibles artfully arranged on a porcelain plate, as they might appear in an advertisement. A piece of cake, two tomatoes, a cucumber, and an egg are attacked by a knife and fork. The footage displayed on the top and bottom color monitors is linked by that on the central, black-and-white monitor. Recorded by a camera strapped to the diner's arm, the black-and-white images follow the fork as it digs into the food on the plate and sweeps into the eater's mouth.

"Much of Zhang's video work documents performances that concentrate attention on a single activity," says Barbara London, Associate Curator, Department of Film and Video, who organized the exhibition. "*Eating* parses a simple, everyday act into subject, object, and verb, turning eating into a surreal event."

Recently the Museum acquired another work by Zhang Peili, *Document on Hygiene No. 3* (1992). In this videotape, a pair of hands repeatedly soaps up and rinses a chicken standing in a basin. At first the chicken is quite distraught and attempts to escape. But after two hours, the chicken becomes calm and stops struggling.

Zhang Peili lives in Hangzhou, a city celebrated for the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts and for its fine cuisine. Trained as a painter, Zhang signaled an interest in non-traditional forms by initiating a series of public actions in the mid-1980s. He turned to video in 1988.

The artist's work has been shown extensively abroad, including the 45th Venice Biennale in 1993, and the 1997 Lyon Biennial, as well as exhibitions in Vancouver, Paris, Vienna, Tokyo, and Hong Kong.

Zhang Peili was also featured in Ms. London's 1997 project for the Museum, *Stir-fry: A Video Curator's Dispatches from China*, a groundbreaking online diary of a trip in which she visited Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Guangzhou and examined China's contemporary art scene. The journal entry on Peili's work can be viewed at www.adaweb.com/context/stir-fry/9-18.html.

This exhibition is made possible by the Contemporary Exhibition Fund of The Museum of Modern Art, established with gifts from Lily Auchincloss, Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro, and Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder. Additional support provided by Sony Electronics. This work was acquired through the generosity of The Junior Associates of The Museum of Modern Art.

Zhang Peili is available for interviews in New York through October 28.

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