

苗子 & 超合作社
超妈们

MOTHERS OF ULTRA
Miao & ChaoCoop



MOTHERS OF ULTRA

Mothers of Ultra is the title of a new video and fashion collection produced by visual artist and fashion designer Miao in collaboration with ChaoCoop based in Jieyang, China. The pieces are presented as a frontal window installation at SYNNIKA in Frankfurt/Main as well as on www.synnika.space

SYNNIKA started working with Miao during the Launch of a Soeng Joeng Toi (SJT) in Frankfurt/Main in August 2019. At that time she was pregnant and working in Guangzhou, mainly with textile and video at the SJT community space in collaboration with other artists and friends. Her contribution to the SJT project at SYNNIKA was a video installation and Blind Date invitation searching for someone to marry her. The marriage ought to protect the becoming single-mother from the Chinese law that would demand from her to return to the region where she was born. Miao gave birth to her daughter Ah Chao (English: »Ultra«) in December 2019 after she got married to herself and to her friends, celebrating a phenomenal wedding in Guangzhou. Before giving birth Miao moved to the city of Jieyang near the eastern border of the Guangdong province. A place where she knows family and where she could have access to the legal and medical infrastructure, that the Chinese authorities would withhold from her in Guangzhou. In her neighbourhood in Jieyang she finds a community of mothers working for the textile industry, mainly for Mattel and other western brands, mainly from home. Here, at a four-hours-car-drive from the



economic center of Guangzhou, she finds a setting in which she can work and live with her daughter, while planning the next steps. The installation on display behind the frontal window of SYNNIKA is produced in Jieyang by this community of mothers around the newborn Ultra – interwoven by daily routine of informal labour, expanded motherhood and the global textile industry. The pieces in the installation are based on textiles, fashion, video and politics of everyday life, portraying the reality and potential future of the Mothers of Ultra.

SYNNIKA, 2020

HEIRATSANZEIGE

HEI

STRAFE
IN CHINA
DIT KEINEN
HT MEINE
RE ICH
CH DENKE, DASS
V KÖNNEN,

EHESYSTEM,
E DEUTSCHE
T BIST,
EMBER.

ICH BIN SCHWANGER UND KANN MIT EINER GELDSTRAFE
RECHNEN, WENN ICH EIN NICHTHELICHES KIND IN CHINA
BEKOMME, MIT MEINER LÄNDLICHEN HAUSHAL
TSREGISTRIERUNG ERHÄLT MEIN KIND IN DER STADT KEINEN
ZUGANG ZUM BILDUNGSSYSTEM UND ZUR
KRANKENVERSICHERUNG. DIES KÖNNEN ABER NICHT MEINE
GRÜNDE FÜR EINE ABTREIBUNG SEIN, DAHER HABE ICH
MICH ENTSCHEIDEN, DAS KIND ZU BEKOMMEN. ICH DENKE, DASS
KINDER VON VIELEN MENSCHEN ERZOGEN WERDEN KÖNNEN,
UND ES GIBT PLÄNE ZUR GRÜNDUNG EINER
MEHRPERSONENFAMILIE, UM DAS TRADITIONELLE EHESYSTEM,
DAS BILDUNGSSYSTEM UND DAS
FAMILIENMODELL ZU BEKÄMPFEN. WENN DU EINE DEUTSCHE
STAATSANGEHÖRIGKEIT HAST UND UNVERHEIRATET BIST,
DANN HEIRATE MICH DOCH! MELDE DICH VOR DEZEMBER.

ICH BIN
RECHNEN
BEKOMME
TSREGIST
ZUGANG:
KRANKEN
GRÜNDE F
MICH EIN
KINDER V
UND ES G
MEHRPER
DAS BILD
FAMILIEN
STAATSAN
DANN HEI



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作品1: 宝宝屎T恤

艺术家: 苗子

“也许光晕已经流失了, 逃走了, 和他离开她的时候一样坚定。现在他跑到某个王家卫电影里, 那个染着暗淡水灰色的电影, 还有许多石灰蓝色压下来, 味道更强烈。他从她那里解脱了; 她怀孕了, 她将和所有她的“朋友”结婚。但我们怎么从我们自身解脱出来呢? 那个明亮的粉紫色已经消失, 只充斥着清醒的头痛。

你还记得我们曾经谈到被叫醒吗? 多么可笑的自以为是, 你不觉得吗? 我觉得比以前任何时候都要更“清醒”了, 但不能睡着这件事像屎一样, 即便我脑海里不断重复播放着这些“我不知道的事情”的片段。相同的事情照样塌陷了。“(何子)

Item 1: Babyshit T-shirt

Artist: Miao

»Maybe my aura had bled out, fled, as sure-footed as he was when he left her, and now he is off in some Wong Kar-Wai movie, the one that's tinted a muted aqua-grey colour, with lots of stony blues pressing down to enhance the flavour. He unhooked himself from her; she is pregnant and going to marry all of her ›friends‹ instead. But how do we unhook ourselves from ourselves? That bright purplish-pink is gone and filled only with the headache of being awake. Do you remember when we talked about being woke? What a funny presumption, don't you think? I feel more ›awake‹ than ever before, and it's shitty to not be able to sleep even if it increases the number of episodes for ›things i don't know‹ playing on repeat. The same same collapses in upon itself.«
(from the wedding video, written by Elaine Ho)



作品2:三合一哺乳衣
艺术家:苗子

Item 2: 3-in1 Breastfeeding Top
Artist: Miao



作品3:七巧板拼布小手包
艺术家:苗子,小玲子

Item 3: Tangram Patchwork Handbag
Artists: Miao, Xiaolingzi



作品4:丁老头Tee

艺术家:小玲子

Item 4: Ding Lao Tou

Artist: Xiaolingzi



作品5:合家忍十字绣和服

艺术家:苗子,马大头,仙女似的果然,fmg55555,

tb61497817,天然呆xiao妞f

介绍:人世间 合家忍 我们的约定 条条路坎坷 谋富贵 气生财 莫真爱 退缩一步 海阔天空 永恒

Item 5: Whole Family Forbearing Kimono

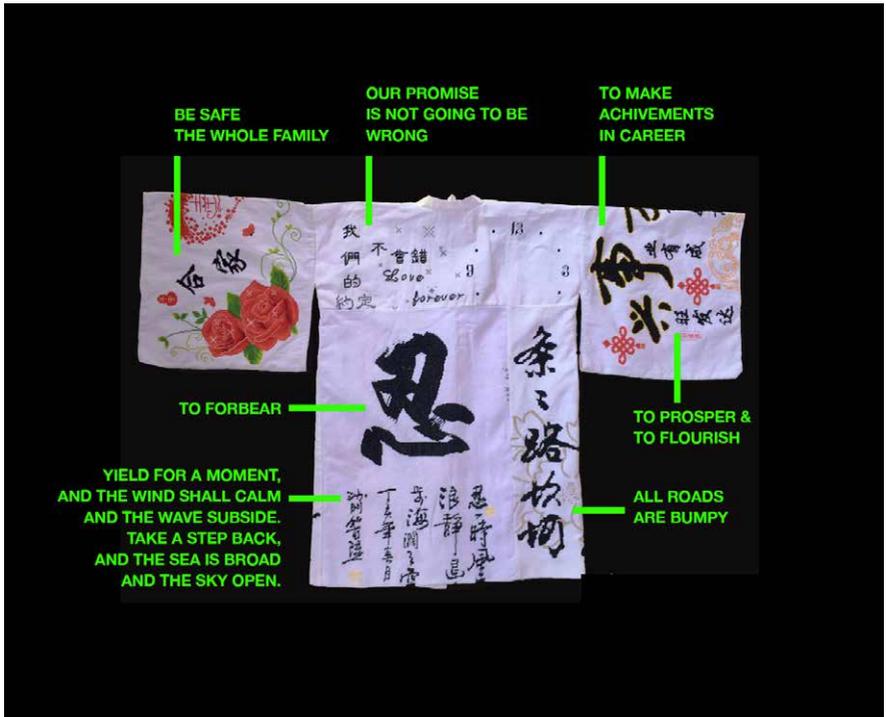
Artists: Miao, Tina, 仙女似的果然, fmg55555, tb61497817,

天然呆xiao妞f

In this world of human affairs, / the whole family, all the families, / are bearing and forbearing / all our promises / all roads / are bumpy / anger brings wealth / prospers and flourishes / do, but do not actually do / all the love / move back and cower / and the sea is broad and the sky open / a family is forever (poem by Miao, translation by Abao)



Cross stitch calligraphy and paintings as wall hangings, usually made by moms at home to express good wishes, used to be common in Chinese living rooms. In our village where there are only two or three restaurants, there is a shop specializing in framing cross stitch -- this might give you an idea of their popularity. Today, however, they are among the least popular aesthetic objects among young people and middle class people. Miao recycled some pieces online and you can see the online nicknames of their creators. Then she worked together with Tina to turn those small "paintings" into both a piece of clothing and a piece of writing, both a patchwork and a collage poem with an intricate and humorous play of Chinese words, of which my translation could barely scratch the surface. But like the original cross stitch pieces, the kimono and its long production process is also a form of prayer whose poignant overtone could be felt by anyone else who have been through



the emotional turmoils caused by conflicts with conventional family values. ChaoCoop has two circles. The first circle is those in the village. Like conventional small co-ops as groups of workers making production together in the same place. The second circle is everyone in our WeChat group, across the country with diverse backgrounds including musicians and punks, still mostly mothers. This kimono, like many others, tries to break the barriers between village mothers here and urban mothers elsewhere, older mothers and younger mothers, mothers who like cross stitch and those who don't. For Miao herself lives and works in between. (Abao)



作品6:哺乳Tee

妈妈艺术家:苗,  琴

Item 6: Simple Breastfeeding T-Shirt

Artists: Miao,  Qin







作品7:城市垃圾环保袋

艺术家:苗,马大头,阿丹,陈惠敏, ♡ 琴

Item 7: City Trash Handbag

Artists: Miao, Tina, Adan, Chenmin, ♡ Qin

Our village is on a riverbank and villagers often go to the riverside to take the ferry to a small town with a big wet market and many small specialty shops like traditional broom stores. In recent years, an avenue with a long riverside park was built on the villagers' farmland, including where Miao's father used to grow vegetables.

On the avenue, Wanda Group, self-proclaimed as the world's largest commercial real estate company, is developing a piece of land in a nearby village into a shopping mall, a luxury apartment complex, and a Marriott. Outside the construction site is a mile-long ads banner with images of the buildings and slogans. We make the bags from those banners. (Abao)



作品8:冬日也要穿短袖

艺术家:苗,丹宝

我们提供手套加长和类似服务

Item 8: Wanna wear short sleeves even in winter?

Artists: Miao, Adan

We offer gloves extension service and the like.



作品9:横幅裤子

艺术家:苗, 马大头

Item 9: Banner-Trousers

Artists: Miao, Tina

Red banners are strung across streets and in public places in China, usually by the government. Last year before the wedding, Miao used red banners to make xiuqiu in one of her attempts to seek a different form of family (see above).

Since then, many public attempts to start an alternative family have failed in one way or another. On the first day of 2020, Miao found herself retreating to the privacy of the village house where she was born in one of China's most conservative regions.

But soon she turned to red banners again, this time to make actual clothing for wearing. Furthermore, the trousers are designed in such a way that the wearer can unzip them anytime to turn them back to red banners and the wearer will become a walking banner on the streets! This time, the red banners are not a proclamation of unusual occasions, but one of the everyday, whose unabashed flamboyance and politically charged queerness seems to be itself already an act to re-configure the space of the public and the private. (Abao)



作品10:肚兜现代版

艺术家:苗子,阿丹,小雷

Item 10: Dudou (Chinese-style chest covering)

Modern Version

Artists: Miao mothers temple, Adan, Momoblast

»珍视« means to value, to treasure.

The co-op was founded with the slogan »Everyone is a nvgong (female worker)«, possibly inspired by »everyone is an artist«. So when Momoblast (Xiao Lei) first reached us online as a stranger thousands of miles away and told us to manufacture some dudous to ship to her, we told her that instead of being a designer and a client, she also had the option to join us as a nvgong – a female worker like the rest of us – regardless of her background. She did.

She experienced a cultural shock and today she still does not look like many co-op workers here in the village.

However, in the cooperative process that is at once economic and cultural, people who are supposed to be artists could see themselves more as workers, while workers could see themselves more as artists.

This process of becoming each other does not happen to everyone evenly; it is contingent to the production process of specific products. For example, the two cooperative kimonos and some individual pieces such as Xiaolingzi's T-shirt Ding Lao Tou allow more room for art for those involved than others. Those products can hardly come out of conventional worker co-ops, not to mention factories.

There is division of labor in the co-op, but specialization is not seen as an end, but as a starting point to break out.



Soon after Momoblast joined and we made elegant, traditional Chinese style indigo dyed dudou together, her speciality started to disseminate organically both as skills and as ideas. So when Miao was examining Ah chao's diaper with an infant stool color card (clay colored, pale yellowish, light yellowish, yellowish, brown, and greenish), she was reminded of Momoblast's color dyeing. Thus came the babyshit shirt and this dudou. (Abao)



作品11: 童装

艺术家: 苗

Item 11: Kid's Wear

Artist: Miao mothers temple



作品12:水洗拖鞋

艺术家:刘纾瑜

Item 12: Washable slippers

Artist: Mitsou





作品13:口罩收纳包

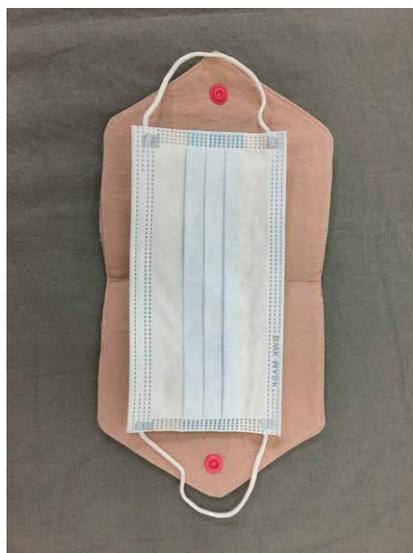
艺术家:刘纾瑜

Item 13: Face masks
storage bags

Artist: Mitsou

Mitsou is a single mother
living in an urban village in
Guangzhou.

During her spare time, she
learned German and
invented this mask bag.





作品15:风雨同舟

艺术家:陈惠敏 陈嘉璐 阿丹 钱仙 猫植 小玲子 玉秀 六合苗母 ❤️ 琴

《点点》,黏珠,猫植,2小时;《人生开挂》,刺绣,陈惠敏,5小时;《hello👁️》,刺绣,钱仙,3小时;《抱抱》,电脑刺绣,陈嘉璐,2小时;《姐妹花》,刺绣,小玲子,2小时;《超妈合作社》,缝纫机刺绣,❤️琴,2小时;《风雨同舟》,玉秀;整件缝合,六合苗母和阿丹,10小时。



Item 15: in the same boat

Artists: Chenmin, Jialu Chen, Adan, Money, CAT, Xiaolingzi, Yuxiu, Miao Mothers Temple, ♥ Qin »A little bit«, adhesive beads, CAT; »Open life«, embroidery, Chenmin; »hello«, embroidery, Money; »hug«, embroidery with computer, Jialu Chen; »Sisters and flower«, embroidery, Xiaolingzi; »mothers of ultra cooperative«, embroidery with sewing machine, ♥ Qin; »in the same boat«, Yuxiu (Abao's grandma); sewn together by Miao Mothers Temple and Adan.





作品14:腋腋

妈妈艺术家:SARS

用各种各样的线来模拟腋毛。
腋下生命有很多种，
不仅有毛毛，还有痣和斑点，
我的腋下生命是几个分散的斑点，
当我举起手臂，
人们看到斑点时经常发问：
“你这里怎么了？”
事实上，我“这里”很健康。
既然诸多常识是反常的，
那就让我们来一一曝光吧~
一起习惯腋下生命出现在视线里~
一起习惯保持信心~
胸前的文字由防震塑料剪裁而成，
防震塑料可以被任何材料替代，
比如布料或生活废料等





Item 14: armpit

Artist: SARS

Use various threads to simulate armpit hair.
There are many different kinds of underarm life,
Not only hair, but moles and spots,
My armpit life is a few scattered spots,
When I raise my arm,
People see spots, they often ask:
»What's the matter with here?«
In fact, I'm healthy »here.«
Since so much common sense is perverse,
Let's expose them one by one
Get used to armpit life appearing in sight
Get used to keeping faith together

The words on the chest were cut out of shock-
proof plastic, Shockproof plastic can be
replaced by any material, Such as cloth or
household waste... (SARS)



苗母与超生产队

跟随苗子从广州到揭阳的4个小时高铁车程里，我睡着了，耳边常常响起苗子哄阿超的声音。阿超的哭声、手足摆动的碰触偶尔将我扰醒，我打起精神逗逗她，但不多时又会陷入睡眠。

苗子很难有休息的时间，阿超似乎不满意只是静静坐着，苗子需要数次来往于车厢之间让阿超的视野有变化她才不会肆意哭闹。

类似的场景总让我感到无力，宝宝在某些阶段对生身母亲有一种非她不可的依赖。作为朋友如果想要“分担母职”，会需要长期、确凿的计划和投入。如何能够让这句话不只是个空想呢？

下高铁后又坐了30分钟的汽车，我们到了苗子幼时成长、居住的村落“东寨村”。村子里大多是类似结构的传统潮汕民居，附近很少高楼，有少量的农田和厂房，不远处通往榕江北河，河的对岸是更多的工厂。村里人不多，年轻人都外出打工或者搬到城市里去了，留在家里的绝大多数都是老人、妇女和小孩。

阿超出生后，苗子和阿豹一起住在村里家中闲置的两层小屋，据家里的长辈说是70年代建的。孩子们的追跑打闹声、邻居在家中的说话声，摩托车街巷中来去的声音，小屋里都能听得清楚。苗子对我说，在这里住感觉没什么隐私可言。

和苗子在一起我脑海里常闪回到发生在广州市二宫那场难忘的婚礼。婚礼后，苗子暂停在上阳台开的服装设计项目“双月”，离开广州的社群回到揭阳。不久曾参与过上阳台的阿豹也去了。当时和苗子一起组织婚礼的朋友们曾设想过“一起养阿超”，但由于广州和揭阳之间的距离、新冠肺炎肆虐和其他变迁，这句话似乎变得越来越不切实际。

揭阳所在的潮汕地区是中国南方极为遵循传统家庭模式的一个区域，家中的长辈很难接受苗子与阿豹的生活习惯、衣着打扮乃至育儿观念，经常会上门给他们提各种意见，因此她们在东寨村生活和养育阿超总会感受到压力与指责。为了避免发生冲突，她们选择与父母保持距离，但时间一长，她们也发现如果仅凭两人

的力量闭门抚养阿超，几乎会失去所有个人的时间，情绪上也有各种吃不消。于是她们尝试沿着村落到处串门，和邻居、亲友们一起相处、聊天，获得照顾的同时还能交换些育儿经验。在这个过程中，她们发现东寨村里几乎每家每户都有缝纫机，于是萌生了组织村子里的妈妈成立生产队的想法，这样可以一起赚钱养小孩。

我跟着苗子拜访超生产队的成员们，各家都在步行可达的距离。住在苗子隔壁的萍接了做摩托车手套的活儿，她的两个孩子常跑到苗子家门口张望，两家人互相送礼物和食物；阿琴和小玲子是一家人，她们家接了玩具厂给小玩偶做衣服的订单，阿琴边高速地车线边回答我的问题：“工厂会派人来送布料，一段时间后再来接走做好的衣服，按件计价，一件4毛钱”；丹宝、敏和苗子在家谈如何制作新的订单，阿超和丹宝的儿子就在旁边玩……

但超生产队里也不全是揭阳东寨村里的人，分别身处北京、义乌和广州的小杨、小雷和萌萌也在其中，她们绝大多数都是妈妈或自我认同为妈妈，或多或少都有从事服装设计、制作或销售的经验，而她们也还在持续地邀请更多的妈妈加入。这些场景和渐渐扩大的联结十分具体地回应着我关心的“如何分担母职”的疑问，与此同时，每个妈妈所面对的境况虽然相似但也各有不同，而一起去做一件事无疑是互相看见的好开始。

苗子在上阳台时一直在做“双月”，回村后也想继续做“服装设计事务所”，理念是：“把设计融入生活，育儿的同时也可以做自己喜欢做的事情”；阿豹在这个过程中搜寻了许多与“自组织”、“合作社”相关的文章与案例，建议大家重视“生产过程”及“公平贸易”，我想其他地方的宝贵经验也在某种程度上鼓励着超生产队进行她们自己的探索。现在，“设计事务所”变成了“生产合作社”，“做自己喜欢做的事情”变成了“每个人都可以做自己喜欢做的事情”。这个推己及人的过程，在我看来尤为珍贵。无论是在工作抑或生活里，小至制作一件衣服，大到养育一个孩子，要抵抗外在环境的强压与规训，最好我们都不需独自去面对。

但在这个过程中，苗子也会提及她发现在城市中创作的经验不一定适用于东寨村。过去她曾参与的艺术团体或社群空间，成员们会花很多时间相处，慢慢交流和玩耍，继而将思考凝结在创作中。但村里的妇女分散在各自的家中，又因为要负担大量的家务劳动，很难有大量空闲的时间。这时候超生产队计划以更公平的酬劳分配做为基础，承接一些批量订单，或是试验一些分头制作部分再整体进行缝制的创作，希望能创造一个合作的氛围，这样社员们可能可以渐渐在互相的激发和鼓励下，在日常中辟出空间去发挥自己的创意。而我想这样的氛围是艺术得以诞生的土壤，而自主地进行艺术创作则导向更多的解放。

后来，苗子将我带到她外婆家门前的小店铺，向我介绍这个新空间。这里经过苗子和阿豹重新清洁、整理，已经开始用作超生产队的工作室和销售点，我将她们准备在SYNNIKA展览的作品一件一件挂了起来，才惊觉在过去一年里，超生产队的成员们总是在生产，在疫情、工作、家庭责任的缝隙中，她们共同凝聚了许多巧思：看网上的教程学做口罩；网上收集十字绣拼成和服；将碎布料制作小布包、手套；用废弃的横幅、海报等材料做衣服、环保袋……作品挂起来之后很快就有些村民围过来看，大多是妇女，还有一两个带着小孩，她们边摸边用潮汕话讨论着这些衣物的制作方法，猜测着它们的去向。

苗子笑着说，现在就像是在展览，我们的展览在揭阳提前开幕了呢！

MIAO AND CHAO COOP

During the four-hour journey on a high-speed train, from Guangzhou to Jieyang, I fell asleep, with the voice of Miao comforting Chao ringing in my ears. From time to time, the crying of Chao, and her hands swaying and taping, would wake me up. I got up to tease her, but soon I fell asleep again.

It was difficult for Miao to have time to rest. It seemed that Chao was unsatisfied with sitting quietly. Unless Miao goes back and forth between the carriages several times to change Chao's sight of the view, she will cry wantonly. Scenes like this always gave me an impotent feeling. At a certain stage, babies may develop an indispensable sense of dependence on their biological mothers. As friends, it would require long-term, concrete plans and devotion to actualize the thought of »sharing motherhood«. The problem is, how?

After getting off the train, with a further 30-minute bus ride, we arrived at Dongzhai Village, where Miao grew up and lived when she was a child. Houses in the village were mostly traditional Chaoshan dwellings of similar structure. Nearby, there were few high-rise, a couple of farms and factory plants, with the Northern Rongjiang River flowing not far. More factories were located on the other side of the riverbank. There were not many residents in the village. Young people have left to work in factories or moved to nearby cities. Most of the people left behind are old people, women, and children. After Chao was born, Miao and Abao lived together in an unused two-story family house in the





village, which, according to the elders, was built in the 1970s. The sound of children running after each other, neighbors talking at home, and motorbikes coming and going in the streets, can be heard clearly in the house. Miao said to me, that there wasn't any privacy living here.

When I am with Miao, I would have flashbacks to the unforgettable wedding in the Cultural Palace in Guangzhou. After the wedding, Miao suspended her clothing design project »Twomoons« in the community space SoengJoengToi (SJT), and left for Jieyang from Guangzhou. Not long after, Abao, who used to be a member of SJT, also went to Jieyang. At that time, friends who organised the wedding with Miao had a plan of »raising Chao together«. But the vision seemed increasingly infeasible, given the long distance between Guangzhou and Jieyang, the COVID-19 pandemic, and other changes.

Chaoshan region, where Jieyang is located, is a region of southern China, where traditional family patterns are strongly followed and upheld. It is difficult for the elders in the family to accept Miao and Abao's lifestyle, clothes, and parenting concepts. They always feel the pressure and the blame when they spend time with Chao in Dongzhai Village, with the elders always visiting them to provide all sorts of advice.

To avoid conflict, they chose to keep a distance from Miao's parents. But over time they realized that raising Chao by themselves behind closed doors would cost them all their personal and work time and make them suffer emotionally. Therefore, they tried to go around the village, get along with

neighbors and friends, chat, get care and exchange different parenting experiences. In the process, they discovered that almost every household in Dongzhai village had sewing machines, so they came up with the idea of organizing mothers in the village to start a co-operative, so that they could earn money together to raise their children.

I followed Miao to visit members of the ChaoCoop, whose houses were all within walking distance. Living nextdoor to Miao, Ping chose to produce motorcycle gloves, with her two children often running to Miao's house to look around.

These two families exchanged gifts and food with each other. Qin and Ling are a family. They received orders from the toy factory to make clothes for toys. Qin answered my question as she was stitching the lines at a high speed:

»The factories will send someone to deliver the cloth and pick the finished product up after a period of time. Each piece is priced at 6 Euro Cents.« Dan Bao, Min and Miao were at home to talk about how to deliver a new order, while Chao and Dan Bao's son were playing near them.

Not all members of the co-operative were from Jieyang. Yang, Lei and Meng, who lived in Beijing, Yiwu and Guangzhou, were members of the co-operative too. Most of them were mothers or self-identified as ones, with experiences in clothing design, production or sales. They continued to invite more mothers to join the cooperative. These scenarios, with expanding networks and connections, offered very concrete responses to my concern about »how to share motherhood«. Miao had been doing »Two Moons« at SJT, so she wanted to continue the »design studio« after returning to the village. The idea is: »Integrate design into



life, and you can do something you are interested in while raising children«; Abao searched for articles and cases related to »self-organizing« and »cooperatives«. I believe the valuable experiences of other places also encourage the ChaoCoop to explore their own way. Now, »design studio« has become »production cooperative,« and »do something you are interested in« has become »everybody can do what he or she likes«. This transformation from the individual to the collective seems especially precious to me. From work to life, from making a dress to raising a child, it would be better that we are not alone when facing the pressure and discipline of the external environment.

Yet during the process, Miao also mentioned to me that the experiences of working in the cities may not be adaptable to Dongzai village. In the artist group or community space she used to take part in, the members would spend a lot of time getting along with each other, exchanging ideas and having fun, which is then sedimented in their artworks. But the women in the village, scattered separately in their own homes, were burdened with household chores and did not have a lot of spare time. Therefore, Chao Co-operative planned to be based on even distribution of numeration, taking some wholesale orders, and experimenting for some works that required both individual and collective production. It is hoped that, inspired and encouraged by each other, members of the cooperative could open up spaces in everyday life for their creativity. And, I think, such an atmosphere offers the ground for arts to grow, while the autonomy of creating arts freely would lead to further liberation.

Later, Miao took me to the little store in front of her grandmother's house and introduced me to their new collective space. It's been cleaned up and reorganized by Miao and Abao, and it's been used as a workshop and a store for Chao Co-operative. The moment I hung up the pieces they were going to show at SYNNIKA one by one, I realized members of the ChaoCoop have always been producing new things since last year. During the pandemic, besides their private work schedules, they had come up with lots of ideas: learning how to make masks from online tutorials; collecting cross-stitch embroidery to make Kimonos; making small bags and gloves from scraps of cloth; make clothes and environmental bags from discarded banners, posters and other materials... women in the village gathered around with their children, fumbling and talking about the construction of the garments in Chaoshan dialect, guessing where these clothes were going.

»It seems as if our exhibition has already begun in Jieyang!«
Miao said with a smile.

Xiaotian Li



东寨村的生活

我们想要给欧洲的读者提供多一点信息,关于超生产队所处环境和村庄里的生活。通过观察合作社,以及比较和识别法兰克福、揭阳、与其他地方之间的同异,这或许打开了一个有趣的视角,让我们得以更好地理解在揭阳互帮互助的母亲们,以及她们生活、工作的状态与所处的社会背景。

德国面临的是高收入、相对受限较多的劳动市场,和(缓和的)福利国家政策。要想象一个合作社的成立,意味着要先准备它的规划、预算和法律层面的考量。而在受管控较少、易变且相对不平等的中国社会中,产生暂时经济利基的可能性更大,比如在相对便宜的乡下生活、在都市中心销售工作。类似地,当德国需要你提前几年开始准备,在中国你可能只需要提前几个月到一年时间开始准备。超生产队就诞生于这样的流动的空间,基于一种独特的与当地村民合作的方式。

在那之前,超生产队的成员们在家里都有缝纫机。我们可以宽泛地把她们视为农村工人阶级家庭主妇。她们照顾两个甚至更多的孩子,有时候还需要照顾其他的家庭成员。家庭和照护工作使得她们每天都很忙碌。除此之外,她们大部分都会定期接一些简单的、可以在家里完成的缝纫工作的订单。工厂将主妇们的家庭作业纳入到它们的生产当中,将零工分配给不同的家庭。村民们在闲暇之余,就利用他们自己的工具去完成这些订单,然后由司机运走这些货品并支付非常少的零工费用(通常不超过一位数的欧分)。这种类型的工作不只是在中国很常见,在世界上其他的低收入地区一样普遍。

在东寨村里,妇女从这类工作中获得的收入非常少,对家庭收入而言也并不是特别重要。在财政上,她们的家庭大多仰赖于丈夫和其他家庭成员的工作收入。虽然有相当多的村民自耕自用不同的蔬菜,很少人以务农为生。就众多在外打工的男人来说,他们有的人每晚回家,其他人在更远的地方工作,只会偶尔回来。还有的人在工厂或者更大的公司工作,或是做一些小生意。甚至还有人在菲律

宾工作。并不是所有人都接受过中学教育，接受过高等教育的更是少数。在很少见的例子里，村里的女性会在公立学校做老师。中国的城乡差异非常巨大，不只是在收入层面，更重要的是在获取教育、医护、社会服务、消费、和文化服务等资源的层面。在东寨村，有少部分赚到足够钱的村民，会用他们的积蓄买一套城市里的商品房，只是偶尔才回乡下。但即便城乡差异巨大，想当然地认为村民就是穷也是不对的。比方说，超生产队的村民们都拥有自己的房子，而且大多外形美观、室内整洁。大部分人都能养得起一个以上的孩子，妇女可以免于打工而留在家里照顾家人和小孩，从而承担起备受村民推崇的传统、保守的榜样形象。大部分的食物都是从当地农民和农贸市场买来的，村里也没有贩卖方便食品和罐头食品的超市。比起在法兰克福购买和制作食物，村里每日的例行公事，比如购买新鲜蔬菜和其他食物、打扫卫生、煮饭、腌制食物和其他工作，需要花去的时间要多得多。而村里的同侪压力，则是另一个使得妇女除了家务和照料小孩以外没有闲暇时间的原因。如果你的房子不够干净，走廊没有打扫，或是你的小孩穿的是脏衣服，你的声誉会在村里的闲言闲语中有所折损。如果你没能达到性别规范的要求，你便会被别人看低，而这种感觉将会在村里如影随形地伴随着你。而这种声誉，或许，比丈夫挣多少钱更为重要。

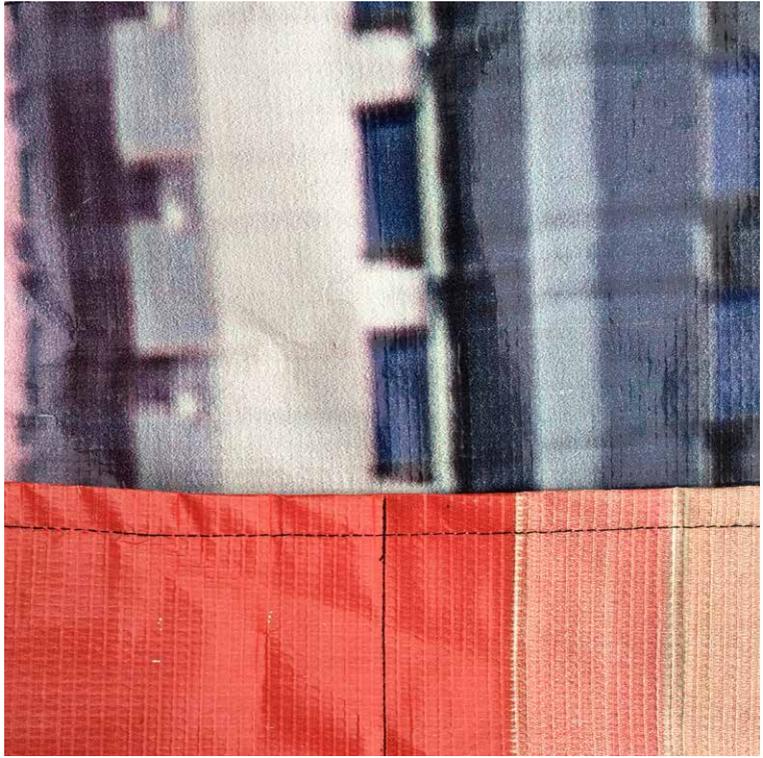
吸引这些妇女去参与“超生产队”的动机和目标是多样和多元的。尽管她们并不需要通过合作来挣钱，她们依然很欢迎这样的合作，因为村子里并没有其他的选择。除了日常的安排以外，村子里也没有其他的娱乐活动。她们彼此相识，但家庭和性别规范使得她们彼此分隔开来，一起做某些事情也是一个绝佳的社交机会。当然还有她们其他的参与动机，我们并不想简单化地描述。用缤纷的设计将广告横幅和裙子做成不同的服饰，似乎是一件不同寻常和好玩的事情，同时也非常的触手可及、信手拈来，因为每个人的家里都有缝纫机。这看上去仿佛就是最好的传达媒介——而它实际上意味着什么，可以通过SYNNIKA现场的详细阐述和超生产队持续的创作来进一步探索。

ON LIFE IN DONGZHAI VILLAGE

We want to give readers in Europe a little more insight into the environment of the ChaoCoop and the life in the village. Looking at cooperatives, comparing the differences and identifying the similarities in Frankfurt/Main and Jieyang and elsewhere opens up an interesting perspective and sheds light not only on the group of mothers collaborating in Jieyang, but also onto their living and working conditions and the wider social context.

While the situation in Germany with high-income, relatively highly regulated labour market and (watered down) welfare state requires a lot of planning, budgeting and legal preparation before one can even think of starting a cooperative, the unregulated, highly volatile and comparably unequal society in China allows for temporary economic niches for example by living in the cheaper countryside and selling to metropolitan centers. Similarly, one would plan for years ahead in Germany, while it is more reasonable in China to limit one's plan to the next months or one year at most and then see what to do next. The Chao-Cooperative was born in this fluid space through a unique form of engagement with members of the local village community.

All members of the ChaoCoop have been using sewing machines at home. We could broadly describe them as rural working class housewives. They take care of two and more children and sometimes other family members. House- and carework keep them busy through much of the day. And in



addition to this, most of them regularly take up small orders for sewing or so to do at home. Larger factories integrate homework into their production and deliver piece work to households, villagers use their own tools to fulfill the orders besides carework and other errands, drivers would then pick up the fulfilled orders and pay very low piece rates (often in the single digit Euro cents). This type of work is common not only in China, but around the globe in low income areas.

The income the women in Dongzhai village earn from these small orders is very low and not really significant for the family income. Financially, their families rely mostly on the husband's and other family members' work. Although quite a few villagers grow vegetables for their own consumption, very few still farm for a living. Among the many male villagers who work outside of the village, some return every evening, others work further away and only return occasionally. Some work in factories or larger companies, others run a small business. Some even work in the Philippines. Not all have secondary education like high-school and tertiary education is certainly exceptional. In rare cases, a woman from the village works as a teacher in a public school.

The rural-urban divide in China is huge, not only concerning income level but more importantly concerning access to education, health care, social services in general, consumption and other cultural services. In Dongzhai village, a small number of villagers earn enough money and use their life savings to buy a flat in a residential complex in the city where they would spend most of the time visiting the village only occasionally. But even though the rural-urban



divide is huge, it would be wrong to think of the villagers in Dongzhai as simply poor. For example, all the villagers in the ChaoCoop own houses which are nice from the outside and clean inside, most can afford more than one child and spare the woman from wage labour in order so that she takes care of household and children and thus fulfills the very traditional conservative role models dominating the village community. Most food is bought directly from local farmers and farmers' markets, supermarkets with convenient food or canned food don't exist here. The daily routine of buying fresh vegetables and other foodstuff, cleaning, cooking and preparing food for conservation and more takes up much more time than for example buying and making food in Frankfurt. Another reason why housework and childcare does not leave much free time to the women is the community's peer pressure. If your house is not clean, the porch not swept or your kids wear dirty clothes, your reputation in the village's chit chat takes a hit. If you fail to fulfill the gender norm, you will be looked down upon and you will feel it everyday and everywhere in the village. This reputation is perhaps still more important than the exact amount of money the husband makes.

The motivation and goals that attract the women to ChaoCoop are multifold and diverse. Even though they don't depend on making money from the collaboration, they would welcome it since there are not many alternatives in the villages. Neither are there many other distractions or small amusements outside of the daily routine. They know each other, but family and gender norms keep them separated, doing something together is also a nice opportunity to

socialize. There are many other motivations and we don't want to simplify. Making garments from advertisement banners and dresses with colorful designs seems exceptional and amusing and as well as something reachable, touchable and doable since everyone has a sewing machine at home. It seems to be just the right medium to express something - and what exactly this is can be explored in the exposition at SYNNIKA and in the continuing practice of the ChaoCoop.

Christoph Plutte



超妈们

艺术家:苗子 & 超生产队

策展人:李筱天,柯冥, SYNNIKA团队

关于艺术家

苗子&超生产队

六合苗母 和农村女人一起生产!

阿里 身兼20职

kaantata 合做更新传统家庭

马大头 怀孕中人

阿豹 人人都是女工

刘纾瑜 三头六臂的妈马

撒娇 看见彼此

小雷 为爱而生

六合苗母 用力!

陈惠敏 我们和田野里的油菜花一样灿烂

阿丹 农村妇女,创新与改造,勤劳与智慧结合!

撒娇 力力皆有声力力皆平等

关于策展团队

李筱天,成长于茂名、深圳、昆明、广州。现生活工作于广州,任黄边站当代艺术研究中心策划人。上阳台业主之一。她也是一位写作者,文章见诸《艺术界》、《艺术论坛》中文网、《南方都市报》、《燃点》、《亚际文化研究》等媒体及刊物。

Chris,在柏林读过哲学,在广州工作和生活,上阳台的业主。有时候写作或者编辑书。

关于SYNNIKA

SYNNIKA是一个关心实践与理论的实验性的集体空间,位于美国河畔法兰克福中央车站区。近年来,通过直接介入剧烈的城市发展进程,SYNNIKA正在不断进化。它的实体空间在

NIKA.haus的一层,所在建筑的前身是一栋写字楼和仓库,位于Niddastrasse和Karlstraße的交界处。基于现有居民的倡议,这栋楼被集体化并被纳入跨区域的联合公寓(Synidcate of Tenements)。尽管当下的都市现状对它的居住者而言,显得孤立冷漠,从国际层面来看,它也同时变得越来越具有可比性。因此,我们感兴趣的是将不同语境中的倡议者连接到一起。我们开展视觉介入、工作坊、讨论与会议,以及探索其他与这个共同环境相连的模式。

MOTHERS OF ULTRA

Artist: Miao & ChaoCoop

Curators: Xiaotian Li, Christoph Plutte, SYNNIKA

About the artists

Miao & ChaoCoop:

Miao/Miao Mother Temple: Producing together!

Elis: Working on 20 roles at the same time.

kaantata: Collaboration upgrades traditional family.

Tina: A pregnant folk

Abao: Everybody is a woman worker

Mitsou: Mama with three heads and six arms

SARS: To see each other

Momoblast: Live for love

Miao Mother Temple: Strengthen up!

chenmin: We are as splendid as rape blossoms in the field!

Adan: Renovate and Transform, Combination of Diligence and Wisdom!

SARS: Every force is vocal. Every force is equal.

Curatorial Collective

Xiaotian Li, curator of Huangbian Station Contemporary Art Research Center(HBS) in Guangzhou, China. Member of SJT space. She is a writer and her writings had been included in Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, Artforum.com.cn, Randian, LEAP and Southern Metropolis Daily, etc.

Christoph Plutte, studied Philosophy in Berlin, now lives and works in Guangzhou, member of SJT. Writes and edits books from time to time, most recently Ngo Van, »Im Land der gesprungenen Glocke«, Matthes & Seitz, 2018.

About SYNNIKA

SYNNIKA is a collective and an experimental space for practice and theory in Frankfurt am Main's Central Station district. SYNNIKA has evolved from the direct engagement with the drastic urban developments of recent years. The space is located in the ground-floor of the NIKA.haus, a former office and store building at the intersection of Niddastrasse and Karlstraße. Through the initiative of its residents the building was integrated into a trans-regional Syndicate of Tenements and thereby transformed into common ownership of its occupants. As isolating as the current urban realities might appear to its inhabitants, they are at the same time increasingly comparable on a global level. Thus we are interested in linking up with protagonists from different contexts. We host visual interventions, workshops, discussions, meetings and other formats relating to this common environment.

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Miao

P. 2: Alvin Luong

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P. 5, 6, 16: Abao

P. 11, 18, 19, 22, 32, 39: Xiaotian

P. 24: Mitsou

P. 29: SARS

P. 36,37: Moli

Miao & ChaoCoop: Mothers of Ultra

苗子&超生产队:超妈们

fb.com/chaocoop

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MOTHERS OF ULTRA

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