



***Salt the Wound, Performance/Film, Lanzhou, China, 2020***

With a knife in hand, I cut a deep, long wound along the riverbank where the Yellow River meets the land. When I reach a point of no return, I shoulder a large bag of salt and retrace my steps, slowly spreading the fine white particles along the knife marks I made earlier. The river ebbs and flows; the knife marks gradually dissipate as the salt dissolves. The two marks overlap, fade, and pass away with the river.













## ***Push Down the Great Wall, Performance, Lintao, China, 2024***

At the geographical starting point of the earliest Great Wall of China—the Great Wall of Qin in Lintao, Gansu—I stack walls of various shapes with bricks atop the deserted ruins of the ancient wall. I then push them down or allow them to collapse on their own.

This performance takes place at the origin of the largest military project built by China's first emperor over 2,000 years ago, using the labor and resources of the entire country. Yet today, few can locate this site.

Returning to the genesis of all walls, to the edge of time and space, to the moment when more than two millennia of confinement were about to begin, I add another absurd wall atop the great wall. I alter the orientation of a brick. I extend a finger and topple a crumbling wall.

Since the early 21st century, the Chinese government has been constructing an ever-expanding Great Firewall to shield its citizens from what it deems dangerous ideas from the outside world. This digital barrier has now evolved into an almost impregnable, complex system of technological surveillance and censorship. Unlike the ancient Great Wall, most people living behind this newly built Great Firewall remain unaware of its existence and its profound impact on their lives.













## Suspicious Stain 2024, performance, work in progress

The performance begins with a series of sustained physical confrontations and topographical movements triggered by constantly changing external sounds. The work traces the bodily history of living as a woman in different areas of China while in a constant diasporic state of flight from one's suspect identity: a perpetual outsider, a woman, a blood package, a cost of rapid economic development, a piece of 'huminerals' (human minerals), a patch for patriarchal society, or a colonial fantasy.

"Sustain" is a word associated with capture, while "stain," embedded within "sustain," points to an eternal escape. Why do we escape? What are we fleeing from? How do we disengage from traps of language and concepts? How do we disengage the internalized stain? The work opens a space for discussion on the embodiment of shame, fears, awkwardness, and complex traumatic experiences carried by discrete Chinese women. It deals with the entanglements of internalized surveillance, bodily colonization, and extractive capitalism on the female body in a post-colonial context.

This work takes the audience on a journey of escape and disengagement through constant hesitation and disorientation within an unfolding process of sustained contamination through ambivalent bodily gestures. It is the first artistic component of Qiong Zhang's doctoral research 'Tracing Ghost Hallucinations in a World of Technological Surveillance' at Uniarts Helsinki. It is supported by the Finnish Cultural Foundation and Performing Arts Research Centre Tutke.





