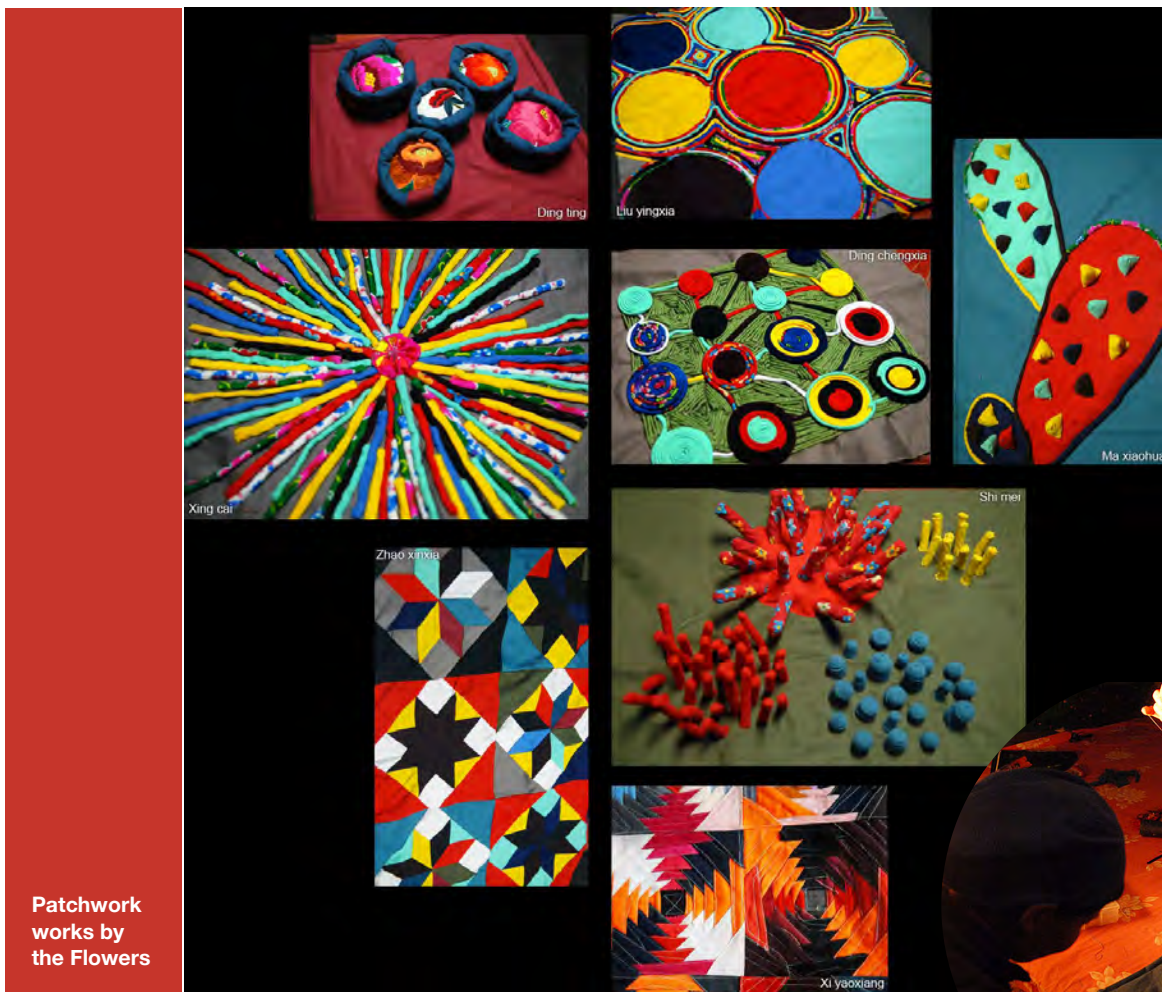


FEMMES DU NINGXIA

February 5-9, 2010 Mission



Patchwork
works by
the Flowers

Reconnaissance mission's report

By Wen Fang

Besides the three traveling days, I was able to spend four days on the spot. I looked at their work and I understood why they do not find outlets. Their products are too traditional and do not match competition: too many similar products can be found in local markets. My dream would thus be to use their techniques and local specificities to create contemporary art pieces of a new type. The Flowers are motivated by my project.

I entrusted each one of them with a "homework" relative to patchwork, to be done before my departure. All of them are talented, work is done seriously, only Ma Jianlan is lacking taste and her work is not nice at all. In addition, Jianlan will not have time in March to participate in the Art Works workshop. On the other hand, I noticed Ding Chengxia, whom I find very sweet and clever, I think I may count a lot on her in the

future. In addition, there are also Shi Mei, Liu Yingxia, Ma Xiaohua, Zhao Xinxia, Ding Ting, Chen Guiqin, Xi Yaoxiang and Xing Cai who are good elements. Ding Lianghua and Li Kexiu are a bit less talented than the others.

All women have been very pleased and also very enthusiast when they saw the outcome of our work. Shi Mei told me she never thought there could be so many possibilities with their techniques.

Thanks to this trip, I could discover lots of things. Primitive local art and its diversified needlework techniques. I already have lots of ideas to prepare a whole exhibition with the Flowers. I am enthusiast, because what I discovered enables me to think of new ideas which are at least as interesting as my initial project of disposable embroidered articles.



Our Flowers are under economic pressure. Let's take Shi Mei's example, one of the most efficient Flowers of the cooperative, through her role of workshop leader and her talent for organization. Her husband would like her to leave for Yinchuan as a migrant, with the aim to pay for at least one of her two sons' education. I ask her to wait a bit more for me, so I wish to hold the exhibition as soon as possible.

I am looking forward to the future as follows.

First of all, as soon as I am back in Beijing, I work on the drawings of pieces and I put together all required material. Then, I plan to come back in Yuwang on March 15, and to work with the 14 women for at least 20 days. I would like to create about 20 large pieces.

In addition, I will ask them to realize the embroidered wastes and send them to me through postal service. Meanwhile, back in Beijing, I will prepare the exhibition. I think this time, each of them may earn about 800 yuans for its work. If the exhibition goes well, they would like to use the profit to have a small library, travel once all together and receive a bit more money.

During these few days spent in their company, I understood how important it is for these women

to have an economic power independently from their husband.

I saw two women who were beaten by their husband during my stay. One is Liu Zhongli, and when we traveled together to go to Yuwang where our workshop is located, I had to hold my tears while looking at her swollen face. I told myself that besides art, I shall do all I can to help them come out of poverty, I shall work hard.



Fang (standing) with the Flowers, and a sunny drought landscape.

