

The Chengdu Biennale and Wikipedia Art Information

Jonathan P. Bowen
London South Bank University
London, UK
<http://www.jpbowen.com>
jonathan.bowen@lsbu.ac.uk

Huan Fan
Sichuan University
Chengdu
China
crisly@foxmail.com

This paper explores aspects of the Chengdu Biennale (especially during 2021–22) and online art information associated with the arts in Chengdu, the historic capital city of Sichuan, a province of China. Specifically, some aspects of creating Wikimedia resources for cultural activities in China are covered, using Wikipedia, Wikimedia Commons, and Wikidata online facilities. A set of Chengdu arts-related Wikipedia pages have been created, together with the addition of associated photographs and metadata. Some of the problems of providing such resources are covered, including language and access issues. The information may be useful for others attempting similar projects.

Chengdu Biennale. Chinese art. Contemporary art. Digital culture. Wikimedia. Wikipedia.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper records art-related activities and organisations including art museums in Chengdu, the capital city of the province Sichuan in China, and, more specifically, online information surrounding the Chengdu Biennale, held in the city during 2021–22. The first author (alphabetically!) is a computer scientist with an interest in digital culture (Bowen & Giannini 2014; 2021), specifically related to museums (Giannini & Bowen 2019a; 2019b; 2019c), and an expert in Wikipedia page creation and maintenance, especially with respect to cultural resources (Bowen & Angus 2006). He is a largely monolingual anglophone based in Oxford and London (Bowen 2020). The second author is based in Chengdu, with a deep interest in media arts (Fan 2019; 2020). She is a native Chinese speaker as well as being knowledgeable in English. The complementary skills of the two authors were essential in the production of this paper.

Section 2 provides some general information on artistic organisations and activities, including art museums, in Chengdu. Section 3 presents specific information on the Chengdu Biennale, founded in 2001, but reinvigorated in 2021. In Section 4, we present a case study covering the creation of Wikipedia information on the arts in Chengdu, and especially the Biennale. We provide some concluding thoughts in Section 5.

2. ART ORGANISATIONS IN CHENGDU

Chengdu Art Academy

The Chengdu Art Academy (成都画院) is an arts organization, supporting contemporary art and the Chengdu Art Museum with a collection of artworks, based in Chengdu. The academy is organised by the Chinese government. It recruits mature professional artists and most receive a salary for producing their work, but it does not operate as an art school.

The Chengdu Art Academy was founded in 1980, as the first Chinese professional art organization established by the Chinese government. Its remit includes painting and calligraphy creation, research into art theory, and academic communication. Originally the Chengdu Art Academy was housed in the Chengdu Culture Park. In 1983, it was moved to Zhijishi Street. The style of the buildings is a typical quadrangle of western Sichuan historic houses dating from the late Qing dynasty. In 2007, the premises were approved as a Sichuan Provincial Heritage Conservation Site. A project to protect and maintain the buildings was completed in 2008. The buildings are operated by the academy as the Chengdu Art Museum.

On 6 November 2021, at the Tianfu Art Park and at the start of the 2021 Chengdu Biennale, the Chengdu Art Academy launched two new

contemporary art museum buildings in the park, namely the Chengdu Museum of Contemporary Art and the Chengdu Tianfu Art Museum, forming a new focus for the Chengdu Art Museum. As a result, the academy is now based at the park.

Chengdu Academy of Fine Arts

The Chengdu Academy of Fine Arts (成都美术学院) is an art school, entirely separate from the Chengdu Art Academy, based in the Xindu District of Chengdu. The academy is associated with the Sichuan Conservatory of Music and has its facilities located at the Xindu Campus. It offers bachelor's degrees and master's degrees.

The Sichuan Fine Arts Institute (SCFAI) is in Chongqing but, since 1997, Chongqing has been a separate province from Sichuan and there was not an equivalent institute in Chengdu. One of the vice presidents of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, Ma Yiping, organised some teachers from SCFAI to move to Chengdu and created the Chengdu Academy of Fine Arts in 2000, which is formally a school that belongs to the Sichuan Conservatory of Music.

Art Museums

The Chengdu Art Museum (成都市美术馆) is an art museum with a collection of artworks, based in Chengdu and run by the Chengdu Art Academy. It has been based in historic buildings at 59 Zhijishi Street. However, in 2021, the museum has been expanded with two new museum buildings in the Tianfu Art Park, with the launch of the 2021 Chengdu Biennale.

The Chengdu Museum of Contemporary Art (成都市当代艺术馆) is a contemporary art museum in Chengdu, newly established as part of the Chengdu Art Museum. The museum opened within the Tianfu Art Park in the Jinniu District at the time of the 2021 Chengdu Biennale (see Figures 7–9), together with the Chengdu Tianfu Art Museum. It is operated by the Chengdu Art Academy. The museum complex consists of three buildings; the others house an art library and a humanities library.

This newly opened museum should not be confused with the existing and similarly named Museum of Contemporary Art Chengdu (MoCA, 成都当代美术馆), another contemporary art museum that opened in 2011 and is located at the Chengdu Tianfu Software Park.

The Chengdu Tianfu Art Museum (成都市天府美术馆) is a further art museum in Chengdu (see Figures 10–14). The museum is located within the Tianfu Art Park. It opened in the park, along with the Chengdu Museum of Contemporary Art, at the time of the

2021 Chengdu Biennale, held in these two museums, both run by the Chengdu Art Academy. The museum is intended to focus on local art in Chengdu. The roof shape of the building is in the form of hibiscus petals, the city flower of Chengdu (see Figure 10).

Tianfu Art Park

The Tianfu Art Park (天府艺术公园) is an urban park with two art museums, as mentioned above, in the Jinniu District, northwest of central Chengdu. The official launch of the Tianfu Art Park was held on 6 November 2021, with the opening of these two new museum buildings in the park, operated by the Chengdu Art Academy. These both border on Yinggui Lake (see Figures 6, 10, and 11) and now form part of the Chengdu Art Museum.

The Park covers an area of 3,033 acres, with scenic views. Yinggui Lake (迎桂湖), the main lake in the park, covers more than 200 acres. There are three lakes in total, Fangfei Lake, Hehua Lake, and Yinggui Lake. As well as the two museums, the park also includes the Tianfu Humanities and Art Library, co-located with the Chengdu Museum of Contemporary Art. In addition, there are art-related businesses in the surrounding area.

The Chengdu Biennale was held in the two new museum buildings in the Tianfu Art Park as well as other Chengdu locations in 2021 (see Section 3 below).

3. THE CHENGDU BIENNALE

The Chengdu Biennale (成都双年展) is a contemporary art biennale event in Chengdu, China, started in 2001 (Biennial Foundation 2021).

Overview

The entrepreneur Deng Hong funded the first four biennales (from 2001). From the fifth event (2011 onwards), the biennale has been co-hosted by local official cultural institutions in Chengdu. After the sixth biennale in 2013, there was an interval of the official event until 2021. During this period, another art event took place, known as the Anren Biennale, mainly privately funded and operated, starting in 2017.

The 2021 Chengdu Biennale started on 6 November 2021, running until 6 April 2022. The official launch of the Tianfu Art Park in the Jinniu District of Chengdu was held on 6 November 2021, with the opening of two new museum buildings in the park, operated by the Chengdu Art Academy. The Chengdu Art Museum surrounds a lake with two new museum buildings, the Chengdu Tianfu Art Museum and the Chengdu Museum of

Contemporary Art. Artworks by more than 270 Chinese and international artists from 35 countries are on display at the biennale. The theme of the 2021 biennale is “Super Fusion”. Chinese artists exhibiting at the 2021 biennale include He Duoling, Liu Jiakun, Xu Bing, Zeng Fanzhi, Zhang Xiaogang, and Zhou Chunya. International artists include Daniel Buren, Yoan Capote, Leandro Erlich, Carsten Höller, Anish Kapoor, and Jeremy Gardiner (see Figures 1 and 14; Gardiner 2021).

参展艺术家：阿列克谢·索科洛夫·康斯坦丁诺维奇 (Alexei Sokolov Konstantinovich, 俄罗斯)、阿列克谢·索科洛夫·列奥尼迪科维奇 (Alexei Sokolov, 俄罗斯)、阿列克谢·索科洛夫·列昂尼德 (Alexei Sokolov Leonid, 俄罗斯)、埃里克·帕西诺 (Eric Pasino, 意大利)、安娜丽莎·帕斯卡伊·塞乌 (Annalisa Pascai Saiu, 意大利)、坂井滋和 (Shigekazu Sakai, 日本)、比利·巴吉尔霍尔 (Billy Bagilhole, 英国)、陈曦、陈晓阳、邓强、顾跃、管怀宾、郭涛、后冈喜信 (Yoshinobu Nochika, 日本)、基亚拉·维塔利 (Chiara Vitali, 意大利)、焦兴涛、杰瑞米·加德纳 (Jeremy Gardiner, 英国)、金日龙、科西玛·布卡雷利 (Cosima Bucarelli, 瑞士)、劳拉·尤勒 (Laura Yuile, 英国)、李遂、李象群、利亚姆·沃克 (Liam Walker, 英国)、刘鹏 (澳大利亚)、刘茜懿 (日本)、柳青、洛伦佐·布里维奥 (Lorenzo Brivio, 意大利)、玛丽·格莱兹 (Marie Glaize, 法国)、玛丽亚·乔瓦娜·索德罗 (Maria Giovanna Sodero, 意大利)、梅健、米尔科·安德烈奥利 (Mirko Andreoli, 意大利)、尼古拉斯·弗洛赫 (Nicolas Floc'h, 法国)、牛大悟 (Daigo Ushi, 日本)、庞茂琨、裴丽、宋戈文、汪蓝、魏光庆、吕蕴蕙 (Woonhae

Figure 1: Chengdu Biennale information on exhibited artists, including the UK artist Jeremy Gardiner (2021).

Exhibitions

The following Chengdu Biennales (from 2001) and Anren Biennales (from 2017) have taken place:

1. In 2001, the 1st Biennale “Yangban Model Art in China” invited 120 artists to participate, mainly paintings on the easel.
2. In 2005, the 2nd Biennale “Spectacle: Century and Paradise” was internationalised, inviting six foreign artists to participate. It was held in the New International Convention Center, Chengdu Century City.
3. In 2007, the 3rd Chengdu Biennale “Reboot” was held. Its curatorial team included the domestic curators Feng Bin and Lu Hong,

cooperating with Britta Erickson and Kuiyi Shen from the United States.

4. In 2009, the 4th Chengdu Biennale had “China Narratives” as the theme, with Jia Fangzhou and Zou Yuejin as curators, 120 participating artists, 271 works involving oil painting, ink painting, photography, video, sculpture, and installations. This exhibition was divided into five subthemes: “2008”, “History”, “Reality”, “Urban”, and “Rural”.
5. In 2011, the 5th Chengdu Biennale invited Lü Peng as the chief curator, named “Changing Vistas: Creative Duration”, including contemporary art, design, and architecture (Lü & He 2012). Two hundred artists from China and abroad participate in this exhibition. This time, the event learned lessons from the model of the Venice Biennale, with one main exhibition and other special exhibitions held at 16 local art museums, which successfully attracted approximately 280,000 visitors. The right to operate the Chengdu Biennale was taken over by the Government.
6. In 2013, the 6th Chengdu Biennale invited Feng Bin and Zhao Li as curators, consisting of two parts: “Relation” and “Young Artists of Ten Years”.
7. The event was not held as scheduled in 2015.
8. In 2017, the 1st Anren Biennale, “Today’s Yesterday”, hosted by a private organization in Chengdu, invited 189 artists from 18 countries and regions and more than 800 works.
9. In 2019, the 2nd Anren Biennale, “A Confrontation of Ideals”, was jointly curated by Lü Peng, He Guiyan, and the Dutch curator Siebe Tettero.
10. In 2021, the 3rd Anren Biennale invited Gu Yuan as the director, cooperating with the art critics/curators Wang Lin, Zhao Li, Xia Kejun, Gu Yuan, Elsa Wang, Li Xiaofeng, Wen Ya, etc. They separated the areas to become the curator of each subtheme, inviting 150 contemporary artists and exhibiting more than 300 works. In the same year, the 2021 Chengdu Biennale was held in Chengdu Tianfu Art Museum and Chengdu Museum of Contemporary Art, and 272 artists were invited to participate, and 17 special invited exhibitions were exhibited in several local art galleries in Chengdu at the same time (Chengdu Biennale Organization Committee 2021). For example, the special invited exhibition “Still on” was held in the Usunhome Art Museum.

4. WIKIPEDIA CASE STUDY

Wikipedia pages

At the start of writing this paper, there was little information about the Chengdu Biennale to be found on Wikipedia (<https://www.wikipedia.org>). The Chinese-language Wikipedia included a rather out of date page with information largely dating from 2011, when it was created (Wikipedia 2022d). There was no matching English-language page. The first author created an initial page in English based on English-language information available on the web (Wikipedia 2022c). With the re-enlivened 2021 Chengdu Biennale held at the newly created Tianfu Art Park (see Figure 6 later) and its two newly built museum buildings (see Figures 7 and 10), there are a significant number of web-based articles on the opening of the biennale and the new museums, some of which are referenced on the Wikipedia page (Wikipedia 2022c).

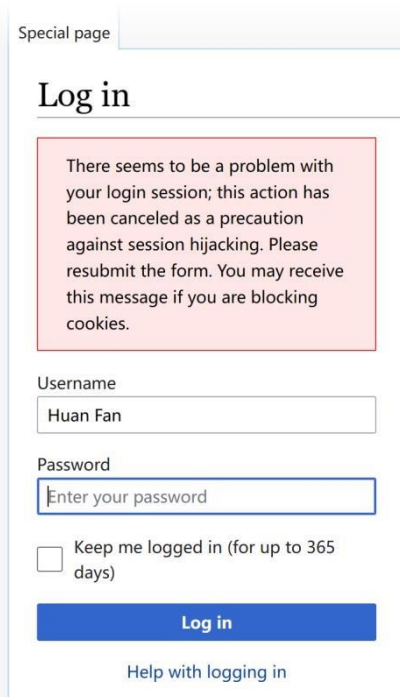


Figure 2: An issue logging into Wikimedia.

The second author then provided more detailed information in English and Chinese, especially in the history of the Chengdu Biennale, with a significant number of Chinese-language online references. However, accessing Wikipedia from China can be problematic. Issues with cookies can cause log in problems (e.g., see Figure 2). In any case, a VPN (Virtual Private Network) is required to allow Wikipedia to be read. In attempting to update Wikipedia pages from China, it was discovered that the VPN IP address was blocked by Wikipedia for editing, probably due to previous bad editing by others on the same IP address (see Figure 3). Thus, a combination of the Great Firewall of China due to

Chinese censorship (Harrison 2019; Yang & Roberts 2021) and IP address blocking makes both reading and writing of pages problematic. Reading pages can be overcome using VPN access but writing or updating pages proved more difficult.

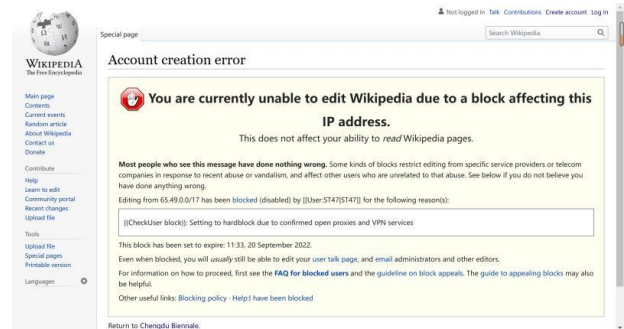


Figure 3: Blocked from creating an account on Wikipedia due to the IP address used.

With the access difficulties from China, the first author used material provided by the second author to improve the information significantly on both the Chinese and English pages, with appropriate Chinese-language references added to the latter. The information on Chengdu art in Section 2 and on the Chengdu Biennale in Section 3 is largely based on the relevant English-language Wikipedia pages, but since the two authors wrote the material for Wikipedia, they do not feel too bad about this blatant plagiarism! In summary, read access to Wikipedia is possible in China with a VPN (e.g., see Figure 4), but write access is more difficult.



Figure 4: A screenshot of the Chinese-language version of the Chengdu Biennale Wikipedia page, as viewed in China.

In addition to Chengdu Biennale Wikipedia pages in English and Chinese, the first author has written associated and interlinked English-language Wikipedia pages on the following, with information including Chinese-language references and answers to queries provided by the second author:

- Chengdu Academy of Fine Arts
- Chengdu Art Academy
- Chengdu Art Museum
- Chengdu Culture Park
- Chengdu Museum of Contemporary Art
- Chengdu Tianfu Art Museum

- Tianfu Art Park
- Yinggui Lake

A new Wikipedia “category” was created, called “Arts in Chengdu”, and all the above pages, together with further relevant and existing pages (and categories) were added under this category (Wikipedia 2022b).

It is interesting to note that some of the institutions covered do not (yet) have dedicated websites, even in Chinese. In China, there is more reliance on homegrown technologies such as Weibo, e.g., for the Chengdu Art Academy (Weibo 2021).

The information in English and Chinese within the various Wikipedia pages was checked by the second author for correctness and completeness (e.g., see Figure 5) and then updated as needed by the first author. Note that on Wikipedia, it is important to cite reliable references for information that is included. These can be in any language. Obviously, in this case, both Chinese and English language references were useful. However, Wikipedia considers some sources of information to be “unreliable” (for example, Baidu), so one must be careful to find reliable secondary and independent sources to confirm information included on Wikipedia, ideally as cited footnotes. Otherwise, pages can (in due course) be updated by other editors with requested for citations, removal of unreliable references, deletion of unconfirmed information, etc.



Figure 5: An issue with the Chinese name on an English-language Wikipedia page.

Each page can ideally include an appropriate Wikipedia “infobox” with entries about the subject of the page in a standardised format, depending on the precise infobox that this used. In addition, all the pages created have been linked from other related pages on Wikipedia. This is always worthwhile to avoid a page being marked as an “orphan”. As noted above, pages should also be well-referenced throughout with citations and footnotes to avoid future issues being raised by other Wikipedia editors. Some additional references have already been added at the request of other Wikipedia editors where that have deemed that a citation is needed.

We have mainly added Chinese-language references in these cases, so both authors were involved with this. The second author found the references and the first author added them to Wikipedia in the appropriate format, with the Chinese title and an English translation of this included.

Wikimedia Commons

Wikipedia pages are best illustrated with photographs where appropriate. This can be done directly by uploading to Wikipedia itself for a specific purpose on a particular page if no copyright-free image is available (e.g., for someone who is no longer alive and where not easily accessible image free of restrictive copyright is available). This can be done under “fair use” rules in American law. However, if possible, it is much better to upload image files to Wikimedia Commons (under <https://commons.wikimedia.org>) with an appropriate Creative Commons licence that allows general use on Wikipedia and elsewhere. It is easiest to upload one’s own photographs since one can then assign the Creative Commons licence oneself, without seeking permission from anyone else.

The second author had several photographs available that were suitable for this project. However, again for similar reasons to those for Wikipedia mentioned earlier, it proved impossible to upload photographs directly from China. Wikipedia Commons does allow photographs on the Flickr website (<https://www.flickr.com>), with an appropriately unrestrictive Creative Commons or Public Domain notice, to be transferred without too much difficulty. Fortunately, it is possible to upload photographs to Flickr from China. Initially, these were assigned the default “All Rights Reserved” copyright notice. However, the second author changed this to “Public Domain”, allowing the transfer to Wikipedia Commons to be allowed.

Once this was done, it was possible for the first author to place the images on Wikimedia Commons (see Figures 6 to 14, all originally taken by Huan Fan). Appropriate categories and descriptions were added to each of the images to make them easier to find by other users. In this case, Wikimedia Commons categories were added for each of the newly created Wikipedia pages (with the same name) if there were any relevant photographs to be included. In addition, all the photographs have been included under the Wikimedia Commons category “Chengdu Biennale” (Wikimedia 2022). Subsequently, it is possible to add these photographs to Wikipedia pages as required and this has been done with a selection of the photographs in the various Wikipedia pages mentioned earlier.



Figure 6: Yinggui Lake in Tianfu Park, with the Museum of Contemporary Art in the distance.



Figure 10: The Tianfu Art Museum from across Yinggui Lake.



Figure 7: A corner of the Museum of Contemporary Art.



Figure 11: Exit hall of the Tianfu Art Museum.

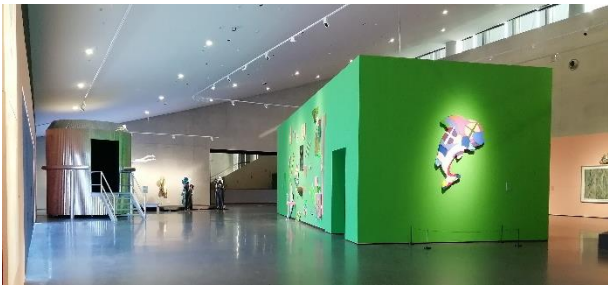


Figure 8: Inside the Museum of Contemporary Art.



Figure 12: Gallery 1 of the Tianfu Art Museum.

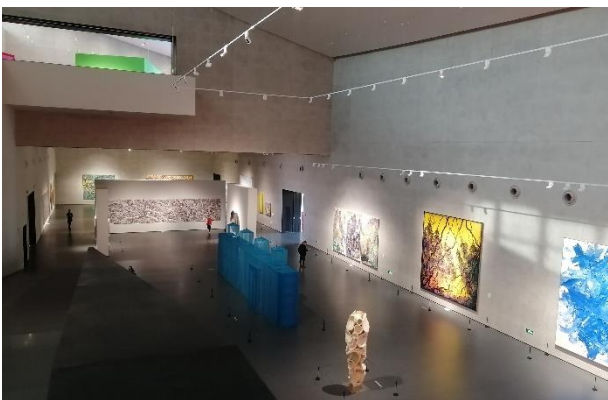


Figure 9: The ground floor of the Museum of Contemporary Art.



Figure 13: Gallery 13 of the Tianfu Art Gallery.



Figure 14: Gallery 13 in the Tianfu Art Museum, with artworks by Jeremy Gardiner (2021).

Wikidata information

The Wikidata project (<https://www.wikidata.org>) is a less visible but important aspect of the various Wikimedia projects, of which Wikipedia is most well-known, and Wikimedia Commons is highly visible with its image repository. Wikidata records metadata on items that may or may not be in Wikipedia. Created pages on Wikipedia will eventually appear as an automatically generated Wikidata data item. It is also possible to create such data items manually, independently of whether there is an associated Wikipedia page.

In any case, it is well worth proactively creating a Wikidata data item for any newly created Wikipedia page. First, one should search the Wikidata site with the name of the Wikipedia page to ensure that an appropriate data item does not already exist. If it does, this can be edited. If it does not, and this is the most likely scenario, an initial data item can be created with the name of the page (ideally the same as the name of the associated Wikipedia page), a brief description, and, if appropriate, alternative names. Wikidata will automatically assign a unique numerical identifier, e.g., “Q11074639” for the entry on the “Chengdu Biennale (Wikidata 2022).

Once created, it is possible to add the names and brief descriptions in different languages as well as English. For this project, adding the Chinese name is obviously appropriate as a minimum. The item should be marked as an “instance” of at least one suitable data item type that is already in existence on Wikidata. For example, the data item for the Chengdu Biennale has been marked as an instance of “biennale”. An image can be added if at least one that is relevant has been created or already exists on Wikimedia Commons.

Further information such as the date of “inception”, the “country” (e.g., “People’s Republic of China”), “location” (e.g., “Chengdu”), “coordinate location” (which can be determined using Google Maps for example), “organizer” (e.g., “Chengdu Art Academy”), etc. (Wikidata 2022). Links to the English-language Wikipedia page, equivalent pages in other languages, and the matching Wikimedia Commons category providing images associated

with the item if it has been created, can and should also be added. This allows the various language versions of Wikipedia and the associated category on Wikimedia Commons, to know that they are all interrelated.

Doing all this soon after creating Wikipedia pages and Wikimedia Commons means that the interrelationships are established quickly within the Wikimedia project overall. Once done, the markup “`{{Wikidata Infobox}}`” can be included at the start of the associated Wikimedia Commons category, which then includes the Wikidata as an infobox in the displayed Wikimedia Commons page, obviating the need to add any other information. Overall, ensuring the relevant matching Wikidata page is reasonably complete is highly recommended for Wikipedia pages.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper records art-related information relevant to the historic city of Chengdu in China. Specifically, activities related to the Chengdu Biennale, especially the most recent one during 2021–22, are covered. The authors jointly created Wikipedia, Wikimedia Commons, and Wikidata information related to the Biennale in both English and Chinese. The paper has presented some of the issues in doing this, which may be a helpful starting point and others wishing to provide similar online information for locations where there is restricted Internet usage, utilizing related Wikimedia projects. It is hoped that this paper will provide some guidance on how to do this.

Note that there is an online Chinese-language encyclopaedia, *Baidu Baike*, that is monitored and censored by the Chinese government (Wikipedia 2022d). For example, compare information on the leading Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei (2021) on Wikipedia and Baidu Baike. The latter does not even include a page on the artist. Baidu Baike claims copyright on all its material, whatever the source. This contrasts with Wikipedia, which provides its material under a Creative Commons licence (Creative Commons 2022). Baidu Baike is far less referenced compared to Wikipedia in academic citations, demonstrating a lack of trust in it (Li et al. 2021). There is some information related to the Chengdu Biennale, but no specific page on it. A comparison of Wikipedia and Baidu Baike in the context of the arts would be an interesting future research topic.

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