



Having earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in London, Hao Jingban has a strong professional background in the field of film theory. From the beginning of her artistic career, she has maintained investigation into the same subject, while continuously studying the formalistic language of creative production. Her insights into working with the mediums of video and film have benefitted from her promotional efforts, in the form of writing and organizing screenings of works by artists and film directors Chris Marker and Harun Farocki, among others. Their works are similarly rooted in reality and history, and often revolve around the complex relations between artistic production, intellectual discourse and participation within societal movements. Their knowledge and experience have had a profound impact on Hao Jingban's own practice: as a young artist, she was greatly inspired by their works, and since returning to China, she has devoted herself to research and creative production that shows immense potential.

Through the process of learning and practicing dance, Hao Jingban has gradually come to know the ballroom dance halls still active in Beijing today. She astutely realized that these halls, and the people that run and frequent them, could serve as an apt historical model for investigations into ideological transitions since the founding of the PRC. She continuously observes them, films them and dances with them, forming a dialogue and gradually turning these studies into art. In the artist's 2012 debut, *Little Dance*, she reconstructs the preparation ritual of a middle-aged woman before heading to a ballroom. Arranging a mixture of furniture from the 1970s and '80s, the artist used long exposures to capture the woman in action, troping portraiture compositions from the '70s and '80s.

Hao Jingban (Chinese, b. 1985) is an artist who lives and works in Beijing.

Hao Jingban will have a solo exhibition at Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art, Beijing, from 9 June–7 August.

Liu Ding is a Chinese artist and curator based in Beijing.

Image:  
*I Can't Dance*  
(film still), 2015  
Courtesy of the  
artist and Antenna  
Space, Shanghai

After *Little Dance*, Hao Jingban has continued research into ballroom culture's sociological context and political threads, collecting historical artefacts and recording the gradual decline of this forty-year-old entertainment form. Completed in 2013, *The Afternoon Dance* is a real-time recording of a Beijing ballroom, with participants entering, dancing and eventually drifting away. We see the surroundings outside the hall, the face of the ticket seller, the scattered dancers warming up under the dim lighting. The music comes on, and the dancers find their partners. We are also presented with the host giving an opening speech, singers performing onstage and people wandering behind the columns, watching others dance with cigarettes in hand, waiting to get on the dance floor. Using documentary techniques, the artist creates a portrait of the highly dated "ballroom," its music, environment and atmosphere, the clothing and status of the dancers and the way they communicate with one another within the hall.

In her latest work, *I Don't Know How to Dance*, the artist takes a more political and historically conscious approach to structuring the narrative, combining various kinds of video resources, including her own documentary fragments inside the dancing halls and interviews with the dancers, as well as TV programs and episodes drawn from historic films. These fragments are simultaneously juxtaposed using four different screens, suggesting a hidden connection. This work illuminates the shifts in definition and destiny ballroom dance experienced through years of constant political change. It also visualizes the ideological frame and social consciousness under which ballroom dance has been placed. All these explorations together constitute *The Beijing Dancing Hall Project*, a historical reflection gleaned through remnants of a bygone era. ☉

“CONTINUED RESEARCH  
INTO BALLROOM CULTURE'S  
SOCIOLOGICAL CONTEXT AND  
POLITICAL THREADS”