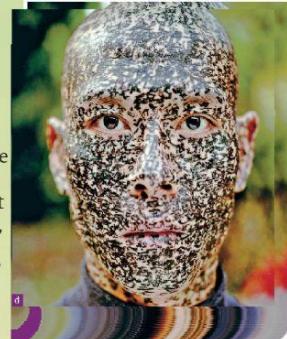


A Portrait Is Worth a Thousand Words

- 1 The tradition of painting portraits is an old one. And artists have always been interested in self-portraits, but there are two Chinese artists who are doing something very different with this old tradition. Instead of painting pictures of themselves, they pose and their assistants paint on them. If you're confused, then read on...
- 2 Zhang Huan asked three calligraphers to paint very small Chinese characters all over his face: first a few words; then more and more. The tiny characters slowly filled his whole face until you can't read anything anymore. His whole face is covered in black ink. Art critic Alina Balanescu says, "I find this work extremely **interesting**. It's called *Family Tree*. Most of the text comes from Chinese folklore. The title isn't very easy to understand, but I think Zhang, who now lives in the U.S., is showing the influence of his [Chinese] roots, he's trying not to forget his family tree. He's doing it in a very **special** way, of course, and the result is totally **fascinating**." The artist has a more negative view: "At the end, I cannot tell who I am. My identity has disappeared."
- 3 Compare this with the work of Liu Bolin in *Hiding in the City*—a series of photographs taken in urban locations. It's a very **good** title because it's almost impossible to see Liu in his photos. People walking by when the photos are being prepared often have no idea Liu is there until he begins to move. Preparing for these photographs requires a lot of patience. Liu has to stand still for hours while an assistant paints him from head to toe, until he disappears into the background like a human chameleon. It's great fun and makes for an absolutely **fantastic** collection of images. But there is another more serious side to his art. Liu makes himself invisible to highlight the difficulties that many artists have in his country. This is a silent protest that is completely **unique** to him.



**Match the artists to their portraits.
What message are the two artists trying**

Portrait "C" is ...

Portrait "D" is ...

The message is...

Read the article again and match the facts to Liu (L), Zhang (Z) or both (B).

- 1 He doesn't live in the country of his birth. Z
- 2 The title of his work is easy to understand.
- 3 His work is connected with how he sees himself.
.....
- 4 His art is a performance that the public can watch.
.....
- 5 His work has a very personal significance.
- 6 His body becomes part of the artwork.

 **In what ways are the two artists similar? In what ways are they different? Which portrait do you prefer (if any)? Why?**