

DOCUMENTARY CINEMA AND THE FICTIONS OF REALITY

William Anthony Linhares

Stacey Woelfel, Project Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The research portion of this project was motivated by the desire to understand the concepts in documentary films that address themes similar to those of my own film, namely the spatial perspective of development and relocation. I wanted to know the specific choices made on location and in the editing room by the director so I could appraise my own work to a similar standard. What is unique about the medium of nonfiction cinema that allows it to represent some of the largest, most complex questions of our age in a matter of hours? What is the potential depth of a documentary film? How does a director take a film to the depths of reality? In order to answer these questions, I completed a textual analysis of three films by Chinese director Jia Zhangke: *Dong* (2006), *24 City* (2008), and *I Wish I Knew* (2010). In analyzing these films, I found that Jia developed a perspective with which to frame his films around. He views the history, politics and economic realities of his country as a giant production of space in which individual workers are forced to become actors in the collective project. In discovering this “staged” aspect of Chinese reality, I further found that Jia often incorporated elements of fiction into the otherwise nonfiction films as a means to reflect this ambiguity. I found that only by indulging in these fictions can reality be accurately portrayed.

