



Discovering one's self

An automata artist finds his true calling

by Yu Chenrui • Chengdu, Sichuan, China • Photos by the author

The alarm on my phone, labeled “make tofu,” went off at 4:00 am. I sat up in bed and got dressed. When I arrived at the tofu store, its lights shone out of the square window, making the window look like a piece of tofu. Next to the building, staggered trees looked just like chopped scallions. My mouth watered because braised tofu with scallions had recently become my favorite. However, this time I didn't come to buy tofu. In order to design *Tofu Counter* (**photo 1**), I had come here to observe how tofu is made.

I wanted to make this device because the store next to my studio makes tofu by hand and its enticing fragrance pervades a surprisingly wide area. Once you have smelled it, you'll never forget it. Unlike ordinary tofu, the handmade tofu sold by this store is rather expensive and only available to members. Customers can apply for a membership card that enables them to buy tofu 12 times, neither more nor less. I



Yu Chenrui in his studio. This area is for woodworking and contains many woodworking machines.