

Shiyuan Liu Solo Exhibition, 2013 March, @ White Space Gallery.

***Incorrectness*** / 不正确

*Too Much Words* by Liu Shiyuan (b.1985, Beijing) was first presented at The 7th Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale. She extracts various characters' portraits from theatrical plots, distributes these anonymous figures and faces on the grey wall - the initial time and narrative threads are completely destroyed by the scarcely identifiable distance between the photo paper and the bodies of the walls. Liu tries to play a rational and insidious directorial role not only by repetitively halting any dramatic appearance on the scene, but also by luring the audience into the border of reality. *Too Much Words* has become the starting point of Liu's artistic practice in the recent two years. The strong interest on the paradoxical relation between performance and authenticity deriving from the funding as well as participation in *An\_Ding\_Men Performance Group* has been carried on to her continuous probing and interrogation on images.

Iconology was once, or still is the most concerned spectrum in Chinese contemporary art. It was directly related to the introduction of Gombrich to China. His theory advocates viewing variability of artistic vision from image-making, and eventually to discuss the transformation of image styles from the perspective of perceptual psychology instead of aesthetics criteria (reference 1). It is worthwhile to ruminate that Gombrich's contribution to the history of art is noticeably different from his influence on the discourse of Chinese contemporary art. As one of the many imported Western reference systems, it encountered the prevalence of pop art shortly after its emergence in China, and the sociological function of iconology was enhanced during that period of time. Under such circumstances, Gombrich's once repercussive theory of anti-aesthetic was relocated to the weaponization of image meanings, and subsequently the concentration on the images *per se* through giving reflections on the pop art trend.

In the process of viewsheds transformation, images are often set to play the target roles. While the significances of images are being intensively questioned, the roles of image creators are disappearing. Although this tendency could provide support to the reaffirmations of certain theories and viewpoints on the history of art, and shape the discourse of art on the level of commercial distribution, the absence of questions such as how the creators participate in the formation of the images and how their knowledge of art decide the representation of images nevertheless restricts our discussion on the core issues of contemporary art to an inertial production level.

These absent questions were precisely the beginning point of Liu Shiyuan's research. For the exhibition *The Edge of Vision, or the Edge of the Earth*, Liu's constant self-questioning on the relation between her work and images were presented through a selection of works with apparent traits of medium. Starting

from the mistrust to the intention of images, the artist is more concerned about how the images could become incorrect, rather than explaining their content: the incorrectness in the relationship between images and medium; the incorrectness in the misplacement of images and our perception; the incorrectness deviated from our commonly mentioned understanding of images in “conceptual art”.

How to accomplish this research on the possibilities of incorrectness? The images Liu Shiyuan is keen on using are all “good-looking” at the first glance – photo frames made by flower images collage, printed and cut jewellery display photos collected from the Internet, images of fruit covered and glued on cliché scenic photographs...After the images are formed, they are also offered vulgar meanings through the dissemination and the values it convey, and this interrupts the images’return to their“aesthetic sense”as objects. According to the artist’s own words, this is a “balance” between “high beauty” and “low beauty”. In *A Conversation with Photography* and *Re-en-act*, the “balance” was realized by the “borderlines” suggested by Liu. She constructs the differences between images by means of superposition, and the superimposed borderlines – such as the synthetic glass between the images of flowers and photo frames in *A Conversation with Photography* – not only implies the connectivity between reality and illusion through the presentation of photography, but also questions the predilection of determinism in iconology. Perhaps, the infusion of such spirit of creation would achieve greater significance after being examined by time.

Similar to *Too Much Words*, video work *The Edge of Vision, or the Edge of the Earth* also attempts to remove meanings and narrative structure from the perspective of general performance. The artist’s practice has progressed from setting borderlines technically (sea level, rough combination of digitally edited cloud and sceneries in the centre of views) to express the concept of borderlines symbolically. In the middle part of the video, there is a dramatic section seeming to be a funeral, where actors in inappropriate costumes walk slowly and pretentiously while crying. We do not feel the sorrow, but the urge of asking about the story behind the scene. The sound from BBC documentaries accompanies the entire video, vaguely expresses its relevance or irrelevance to the visual content played, and the deceitful protagonist has already been converted from the elements in the work to the artist herself.

During her study in School of Visual Art, Liu Shiyuan’s tutor, artist Penelope Umbrico introduced her practice to many possibilities. Umbrico’s work bears an archival characteristic. She collects images about sunset from the Internet, place them together for *Suns (from Sunsets) from Flickr* (2006 - present). Starting from the synonymity of images, Umbrico’s discussion seeks to obscure the boundary of image significance’s extension and intension, and hence to complete a linguistic subversion. Collecting as Umbrico’s mean of creation aims at social ideographical system, however, for Liu Shiyuan, collecting is more spontaneous. The handwork contained during the collection was at her prior concern – this way of collecting makes the technical correctness of technological medium, such as photography and video become suspicious.

From Roland Barthe's structuralism interpretation on photography to the roles analog signal and digital signal movies play in different period of time, the influence of technological medium to art never vanishes in the contemporary art discourse. In responding to this point, Liu Shiyuan proposes an incorrect answer from her work, an answer that is not only significant in the field of iconology, but also indicates a possible path for the association of medium and contemporary art. The latter aspect is particularly worth looking forward to, under the historical and contemporary standardized context.

See reference 1: *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* by E.H.Gombrich Translated by Lin Xi, Li Benzhen, Fan Jingzhong Zhejiang Photography Press, 1987

By Su Wei Translated by Yichen Song

在第七届深圳雕塑双年展上，艺术家刘诗园（1985年生于北京）第一次呈现了作品《多嘴的人》。她用摄影的方式抽取了戏剧场景中不同人物的肖像，这些无名者的身体和面容散列在灰色展墙上，原初的时间和叙事线索被相纸与墙体之间几乎无法辨识的距离挤压和破坏殆尽。刘诗园试图扮演一个理性而阴险的导演角色，不仅频频叫停任何戏剧化的出场，还将观众诱引至真实的边界。《多嘴的人》成为刘诗园近两年创作方向的起点，而曾经发起并参与过“安定门戏剧小组”的经历让她对表演性和真实性的悖谬关系产生了浓烈的兴趣，这一点，一直延续到她对图像的反复试探和逼问之上。

图像学曾经甚至现在都是中国当代艺术中最被关注的领域之一。这个领域最开始的形成，与贡布里希被介绍到中国有着直接联系。他所提出的学说倡导从研究制像（image-making）方式出发观看视觉变异性（variability of artistic vision），并且最终从知觉心理学而非美学的角度讨论图像风格的演变(1)。值得玩味的是，贡布里希对艺术史的贡献显然与他对中国当代艺术讨论的影响有着明显的不一致，作为众多从西方引入的参照系之中的一个，他在中国出现后不久，恰好赶上中国波普艺术的盛行，图像的社会学功能在那段时期被放大。贡氏学说曾经一时引起反响的反美学性在这个背景下被引渡到对图像意义的武装、以及之后出于对这种趋势反思的目的而发生的对图像本体的关注上。

在这一视域的切换过程中，图像往时，淡化了图像制造者的角色。这个倾向，为某些理论和艺术史视角的不断确认提供了支持，也和同塑造了商业流通层面上的艺术话语。但是，创作者如何参与图像的形成，以及创作者对艺术的认识如何决定了图像的再现，这些问题的不在场，很大程度上把我们对当代艺术核心问题的探讨仅仅限定在一个惯性生产的层面上。

刘诗园的考察正是从寻找这些不在场的问题开始。在这次名为“视线的边缘,或大地的边缘”的个展上，她通过几件媒介性极强的作品不断提问自己的工作与图像之间的联系。这些工作从对图像指义性的不信任开始，相比于对于图像内容阐释的兴趣，她更关注如何让图像变得不正确：图像与媒介之间关系的不正确，

图像与我们知觉之间错位的不正确，图像与我们通常所谈论的“观念艺术”中对图像的理解所偏差出的不正确。

如何完成这种对不正确的可能性的考察？刘诗园热衷使用的这些图像，首先看起来都很“好看”。用花朵图片拼贴出的相框，从网络上搜集并打印裁剪的珠宝图片陈列，覆盖模糊在通俗风景照片上的水果图片……图像形成之后由于传播和负载的价值观而获得了庸俗的含义和价值，这让图像无法还原到图像之物本身所具有的“美感”之中，用艺术家自己的话说，这是一种在“high beauty”和“low beauty”之间的“平衡”。在《与摄影的对话》和《做戏》两个作品中，这种“平衡”是通过刘诗园所提示出的“边缘线”而达成的。她用叠加的手段制造图像之间的差异，叠加后的边缘线——比如《与摄影的对话》中，处在花朵图像和相框表面之间的有机玻璃——不仅暗示了通过摄影呈现出的真实与错觉之间边界的可通透性，同时也质疑了图像学中那种对决定论的偏好。或许，这种创作意志的灌注，将在接受时间的检验后获得更大的意义。

与《多嘴的人》相似，录像作品《视线的边缘,或大地的边缘》也在努力抽离意义和通常表演意义上的叙事结构，从技术性地设置边缘线（海平面、云层与视野中心景物经过数字编辑后粗糙地拼合在一起）到象征性地表达边缘线的概念，艺术家的工作推进了一步。在影片的中段，戏剧性地穿插进一段似乎是葬礼场景的桥段，身着并不适合葬礼场合的演员缓慢做作地行走、哭泣，我们感受不到悲伤，反而要发问故事背后到底是什么。作品中BBC电视台纪录片的声音伴随始终，它与影像内容的关联似有实无，这时撒谎的主角已经从作品中的元素换到了艺术家本人。在纽约视觉艺术学院就读时，刘诗园的老师艺术家Penelope Umbrico为她的创作打开了很多门。Umbrico的创作具有一种收集和文献性（archival）的特征。她曾经从网络上收集有关日落景象的图像，将这些照片并置在一起创作了作品《Suns (from Sunsets) from Flickr》（2006年至今）。Umbrico的探讨从图像的同义性入手，试图模糊图像意义的外延与内涵的界限，从而完成一种语言学的颠覆。Umbrico使用收集这种形式针对的是社会表义系统，与她不同，刘诗园的收集更加随意，她更在意收集中蕴含的手工性劳动，这种收集方式让技术媒介如摄影、录像的技术正确性在她的创作中变得可疑。

从罗兰·巴特对摄影术的结构主义解析，到模拟信号电影和数字信号电影在不同时间扮演的角色，技术媒介对艺术的影响从来不会消失在当代艺术的讨论里。从这一点上说，刘诗园用她的创作给出了不正确的答案：这个答案，不仅在图像学领域具有意义，也提示出一条媒介如何与当代艺术进行关联的可能道路。尤其是后一点，在历史和当下的标准化语境中，值得去期待。

(1) 参见：《艺术与错觉——图画再现的心理学研究》，E. H. 贡布里希著，林夕、李本正、范景中译，浙江摄影出版社，1987年。

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