

Wai Kit Lam - Review

Happy Encounter – Marcos Vidal Font & Wai Kit Lam – A Review

- Gladys Kwong, 2.2017

To Marcos, an artist, Hong Kong is a city of constant reinvention, full of anticipation and excitement.

Marcos grew up playing with toy combinations, disassembling and reassembling parts. One can find similar examples of reinvention in the city every day; we take our favourite things apart to put together again something new, something beneficial. In "Happy Encounter," we see how the artists take apart old things to discover new meaning and value.

As children, we would play with anything, even useless objects – some might call them trash – and still find immense joy and pleasure in doing so. We would carry these "trash" around like our best friends, pair them up with other objects to make a couple, etc. This is an act of mimesis, and we learn about the world through such kind of play. Jacques Lecoq, French actor and mime, once said that humans are naturally predisposed to imitate things they love. To stop imitating is to stop loving; that, or we have foolishly fallen into the belief that there is no more to discover or learn about the world.

The first artwork that I saw in the exhibition is *Waiting... Despairing...* – a recording of the artist waiting despondently by the sea. Turning away from the screen, I saw a face gazing up at me; it was a giant ice cream cone with a pair of disposable plastic spoons for eyes. These mundane, everyday objects – the ice cream cone and plastic spoons – were given new roles in this piece, almost like new lives. There is, however, a certain irony in how they are placed in front of a fireplace. The cone also has "legs" – it is placed on top of a long-legged stool. It is a cheeky reminder of how this inanimate setup does have the capacity to "run" from the burning fire of the fireplace. Quite an oxymoronic juxtaposition between motion and stillness. This piece is titled, quite aptly, *Happy Danger*.

With the acquisition of "eyes," the ice cream cone also sacrificed some of its freedom. The look of bewilderment on the cone is not unlike that which you see on the faces of city kids; the curious yet resigned faces as they hear about city dangers from their anxious parents. Life and motion, after all, come with their hazards.

Entering the main exhibition space you will have already met the other "residents" of V54, who are hanging out on the table. In fact, *Jumping Around* at V54 is a set of photographs of objects found near V54; they were taken inside V54 to become its "residents."

These "residents" of V54 huddle around at a corner of their own; they are connected to each other via a network of thick black lines, just like stations on the metro system. These set of found objects are part of a piece called *Networking Table*. This piece is also accompanied with an electronic tablet, placed next to the group of found objects. The tablet screen shows a CCTV camera-view of a corner of a room. The CCTV, which is controlled by a kit, shows another big screen in the room; a miniature terracotta soldier is moving around in front of the big screen. I was rather amused by this play on the "screen within a screen" trope; it also seems that in these world of screens, out of our direct line of sight, these objects – the "residents" – come alive, going on their merry ways.

According to the artist, it is incredible that we live in a world with so many CCTVs. Sadly, it is part of the reality of living in Hong Kong – we have simply grown used to being monitored by CCTVs. The German playwright Bertolt Brecht (also known as the founder of the epic theatre), spoke of the "distancing effect." I wonder if someone can write a play, to provoke us to thinking about why we deserve so much CCTVs surveillance in our lives (in elevators, offices, shops, etc.) In fact, every home in Hong Kong has a CCTV monitor

showing the lobbies and elevators of the building – isn't that strange? This might be an instance when the "distancing effect" of theatre could be especially useful to us – art, in all its forms, can help us rediscover and rethink our worlds.

Of course, we can say that this obsession for constant surveillance is grounded in our very human need for "security;" however, what do we lose in exchange for security? I think we all know the answer to that question. Walking into another exhibition space, I was startled by a piece – *White Ceiling Chair*. At first sight it simply looked like a white chair, affixed to the ceiling, with some water trails dripping from the back of the chair – a little like Pop Art. Looking more closely, it seems that the lines are humourful stand-ins for the chair's non-existent legs. I'm also surprised by how securely the chair hangs from the wall. (I heard that Marcos stuck the chair on without much trouble? And a great job at that too – you could barely see hints of tape or glue.) Quite soon I began to wonder: how would the view be from that chair? How would it feel?

And then I realised; the chair was a direct reference to the CCTVs that I saw earlier in the exhibition. The view from the chair would be the view from a CCTV camera. This realisation changed my appreciation of *White Ceiling Chair* – it is no longer purely a tongue-in-cheek take on the upside-down perspective; it can also be seen as an ominous reference to the oppression brought on by constant CCTV surveillance.

Found object collages have been around for quite a while, and are hardly new concepts; however, as we have seen in this exhibition, the process of reassembling old objects into new pieces is more often than not a kind of catharsis, revealing our innermost wants and hopes. What are these wants and hopes? We put things together to find order, some sort of answer; however, we realise that what we ultimately lack is an inherent sense of order – an internal compass, to help us know where we come from, and where we are heading to.

“Happy Encounter” - Marcos Vidal Font & Wai Kit Lam 觀後感

- Gladys Kwong, 2.2017

藝術家Marcos對香港的印象是一個很多翻新，拆件再重組，而且充滿等待的地方。

城市中天天上演拆件重組，而拆件重組這舉動跟他兒時起的興趣有共通之處。城市的拆件翻新，拆的往往都是我們喜愛的東西，去達到一些莫名其妙的社會福利。藝術家在 Happy Encounter 裡的拆件翻新，則是發掘趣味和生命。

小時候我們拿著一件現在會覺得是垃圾（沒有社會價值）的東西，把它們放來放去，與毫無關係的物件合併，也可以樂上半天。這是一個透過模仿去認識世界的動作。Jacque Lecoq（法國演員，默劇及形體指導）提出人有模仿自己喜愛的東西的天性。當我們停止這樣做，我們也許已不喜愛世上的東西，也以為自己已知道大部份維持我們生活所需的知識，不需要知道更多。

在展覽中我第一件觀賞的作品，是一段藝術家在海邊等待至心靈枯竭的錄像《等待...絕望...》，轉身後方就有對眼在凝視我和錄像畫面的方向，那是藝術家用即棄湯匙砌成，給雪糕筒的一對眼睛。那用意是令日常常見物件得到生命，但那被網綁在火爐邊的表演方法卻與它得到的生命背道而馳，雪糕筒還有用櫟做的腳，本身是靜態意義的物件得到了動態的肢幹，還是默立在火爐前，更加有活不出生命力但又擁有生命的感覺。作品名字叫《快活的危險》。

雪糕筒擁有了眼睛，就同時擁有網綁。在香港，在街上聽得最多或見得最多就是家長透過暴戾的語言或肉體痛楚去教授小孩什麼是危險，就會令我想起這雪糕筒的樣子。仍然有雙好奇的眼，但失去身體動力和生命力。當得到了生命就同時得到了危險，這是一種相生必然性。

走到大廳，看到檯上就有v54的「其他居民」。經他們介紹之下得知原來是他們在附近搜集回來的小物件，組合而成的作品記錄於相片集《跳著舞著於v54》。

那些小物件居民自成一角，像地鐵線路一樣呈現在檯子上點線相連，就成為了另一件作品《網絡桌子》。此展品的重點在右手邊的小螢幕上，一望就嚇我一跳，因為mon裡還有個細mon，細mon是以監視的CCTV視角拍攝，由Kit操刀，其中一個居民迷你兵馬侖在鏡頭前自己動了起來。你會看到在映像裡那些小居民像沒有人類監管下，自得其樂在舞動。

藝術家解釋對於他來說，生活的地方有那麼多CCTV是一件不能想像的事。可惜，香港的我們都已習以為常。

Bertolt Brecht（德國戲劇家，詩人，辯證劇場的發源）提出陌生化這字眼，使我想到如果有套戲劇可以令我們思考為什麼我們「deserve」在日常生活被CCTV監視（例如在電梯、工作場所、店舖……甚至我們傾談起才想起，香港住宅的電視機有一台是顯示住宅大堂及電梯的CCTV總mon）是一件奇怪的事！那可能就是陌生化可以起作用的時候。而所有形式的藝術也有使我們重新發現世界的力量。

一句保安理由已經可以解釋一切，但我們失去了什麼自己心中清楚明白。

走入另一展覽房間，《白色頂篷椅子》著實嚇了我一跳，是驚喜之作。起初我以為是一張白色椅背滴下了幾條水痕，粗略地看第一印象有點像Pop Art。原來牆上的線是代表櫟腳。首先我是驚訝椅子在近天花板的牆上出奇地固定。（聽說Marcos兩三下手腳已經固定好，而且看後面也不太見到接位）之後會開始想到底坐在上面是一種怎樣的視角。感覺又會如何？

看完剛才的CCTV再看這椅子，我發現其實這椅子其實拿取了CCTV的權威視角，這想法令作品的質地又改變了。這擺法可以有個趣味反地心吸力的角度，也可以是真人坐上去當CCTV的壓迫角度。

舊物重組不是一件新鮮的概念，但這做法和過程中，包含了一些我們在等待什麼，但也不得要領的心情，那會是什麼呢？

我們整理了是為求找到秩序，但似乎缺乏的是內在的秩序，我們需要知道心從哪裡來，會去哪裡。