

沈心怡的物之剧场 GHOST DANCE— ON SYDNEY SHEN'S THEATER OF OBJECTS

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●● 沈心怡,《我的名字是鲁本·戴斯》,2021年
古董篮、布料、树脂,37 x 37 x 23 厘米
图片致谢艺术家及Vacancy画廊

Sydney Shen, *Myne Name Is Lubbert Das*, 2021
Vintage basket, fabric, flocked resin, 37 x 37 x 23 cm
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Vacancy



在沈心怡2021年 Gallery Vacancy 空间的个展“苦鞭作乐”(Misery Whip)中,情色和劳动、欲望和幽默、装饰和身体打造了一套感性的修辞对位法。展览围绕对于美式装饰和田园美学的介入展开,使整个空间看上去像是堆满了抽象化的女性衣饰、处刑工具、农舍用品。绵延的稻草垛成为篮子、“琴”、束身衣、铁锹的布景或台座。观者似乎置身于葬礼、农舍、缝纫室,抑或是在观察一部尴尬的性爱喜剧留下来的残余。这一幕物的剧引发了自相矛盾的感受:仿佛受辱是优雅的、荒诞是可爱的、而真心话都是可悲的(抑或反之)。就像“苦鞭作乐”(Misery Whip)这个标题一样,whip(鞭子)和whipping cream(泡打奶油)勾起语音上的联想,而奶油之甜又和苦鞭之苦形成语义的对照。口腹之欲和鞭的暴力指向欲望和惩戒、游戏和荒诞。沈心怡的作品像一出关于材质的复调音乐,让闯入者失措,进而被推入迷宫般的即兴剧场。

●● “沈心怡:苦鞭作乐”展览现场, Vacancy画廊, 上海, 2021年
图片致谢Vacancy画廊

In “Misery Whip,” Sydney Shen’s solo exhibition at Gallery Vacancy, eroticism and labor, desire and humour, ornamentation and body all become rhetorical counterpoints that underscore a theater of objects. Loosely organized around cross-references to “farmhouse chic” or “American decorativeness,” the exhibition looks like a plethora of things ranging from feminine garments, archaic implementation devices of punishment, and farmhouse tools. Much like scenography design, what can be gleaned from those things are imaginations about farmhouse, funeral, needlework studio, or even a sex farce. The carefully organized “pool” of materials simultaneously evoke polarizing and ambivalent feelings—somehow someone finds oneself elegantly humiliated, lovingly grotesque, and miserably funny. The exhibition’s title evokes the phonological association between “whip” and “whipping cream.” The sweetness of cream and the bitterness in the Chinese word for “misery” make an intriguing semantic contrast, as if both good and bad appetites are welcome. Desire and violence are both present. Almost like a multipart music piece, Shen’s work creates the labyrinth of improvised motifs and the theater of great madness for invaders as much as absentees.

View of “Sydney Shen: Misery Whip,” Gallery Vacancy, Shanghai, 2021
Courtesy Gallery Vacancy



●● 沈心怡，《愈后创痕》，2021年
木材、金属零件、恐龙胃石，92 x 49 x 5 厘米
图片致谢艺术家及Vacancy画廊

Sydney Shen, *Cicatrix*, 2021
Wood, metal hardware, dinosaurs gastrolith stones, 92 x 49 x 5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Vacancy



琴形母题

《愈后创痕》《肠卜司》和《嘉娜·萨克斯》(均为2021)中,沈心怡以中世纪用来惩罚女性犯人的琴形枷锁为样板锻造物件,并在其中加入金属小球或恐龙的胃石。枷锁型木胚中的轨道和胃石形成星轨和星石,奏响一种几何学上的多声部合奏。而在早期作品《请不要吃我》(2015)中,琴型扫帚和蝎子标本这两件看似风马牛不相及的物件被重组为一件物品,蝎尾和蝎螯像散落一地的高音谱号和音符,仿佛清扫完毕就会奏出不成句的乐章。回到展览中最核心的《歌剧是一种坏影响》(2017),稻草束上抛掷的束身衣像是被解构的稻草人,其语义在野合、劳作、疯癫之间摇摆,暧昧不定。

如艺术家本人所言,这些装置有一种舞台道具般的特质。如果沈心怡的作品可以被视为剧场,那么这是一场消音后的符号剧场。这些装置从特定的装饰母题出发,以音乐性的格式组合不同材料,从中浮现女性消费品中常见的特征,即可爱和诡谲的统一。

沈心怡2016年的作品《Avicularia Avicularia》中,一条绳索从吊顶上伸出,将倒吊的钢琴四角如日本绳缚一般绑缚起来。钢琴成为塔罗牌里发疯的骑士奥兰多,它同时也是艺术家饲养的蜘蛛(Avicularia avicularia)。沈心怡搜集的民间神话中,钢琴又化身成为被毒蛛咬伤而疯狂跳起塔兰台拉舞,直到力竭而死的少女。钢琴、舞蹈、少女

●● 沈心怡,《歌剧是一种坏影响》,2017年
棉、金属零件、稻草、烫金纸板火柴、牛奶桶、蜡,尺寸可变
图片致谢艺术家及Vacancy画廊

THE MUSICAL MOTIF

In *Cicatrix*, *Haruspex*, and *Gunne Sax* (all 2021), Sydney Shen borrows the form of a “shame fiddle,” a violin-shaped medieval implement of punishment for those—mostly women—convicted of petty crimes. The restraint devices are “propped” like minilabyrinths with embedded dinosaur gastroliths and round metal objects, looking almost like planets orbiting in the universe. She often improvises in a way not dissimilar to musical improvisation: you see an object or decorative motif reinvented through changes in forms and materials, much like musical motifs chiming in and fading out. In her earlier piece *Please Don't Eat Me* (2016), scorpion specimens and a cello-shaped mopping brush find each other in “f”- and “s”-shaped patterns as if both are tuned in perfect strings. In *Opera is a Bad Influence* (2017), embroidered straitjackets are scattered over heaps of straw like the remains of a dissembled scarecrow, conveying something between hysterical sex and farmhouse labor. The installations encumber the space with a cast of sculptures, like a muted theater. Starting with some repetitive decorative motifs and a dancelike shuffling of materials emanating from her earlier work, these installations introduce an oneiric conjuncture of uncanniness and cuteness, like messages embedded in female-targeting consumer goods.

In Shen's *Avicularia Avicularia* (2016), a toy piano is hung upside down, its four legs tied by a rope from the ceiling. The work recalls so many things: Orlando Furioso, kinbaku, and of course

Sydney Shen, *Opera is a Bad Influence*, 2017
Cotton, metal hardware, hay, embossed matchbook, milk bucket, wax, dimension variable
Courtesy the Artist and Gallery Vacancy

和蜘蛛在神话层面相交。而《伟大浪漫主义时代的最终降临》(2016)是更加怪异的一种变体。艺术家将使用了猪血和自己的血液混合制成的颜料涂抹在琴谱上,又将潮湿的银耳如献礼的白色花束一般排列在琴板上。韩炳哲在《美的救赎》中分析,黑格尔认为视觉和听觉在品味艺术品时占据主导,而嗅觉和触觉被抛弃,因为这二者跟物质本身固有的感官属性不可分割。潮湿的银耳、血液分子,头骨和蜘蛛……这种杂糅带来的感触显然不是波平浪静的,而透露着主体对观众的否定。在韩炳哲看来,这种主体的否定能力使艺术品避免沦为讨好消费者的工具。

“钢琴对我来说意味着一种身体的规训,和我的装置可以说是截然相反。”沈心怡在和我的对话中提到。或者,罗兰·巴特在《符号帝国》中写作日本文化的方式可以为观察沈心怡的作品提供一种注解:从细微的触觉、嗅觉、听觉出发,让对于陌生之物的身体实感带引想象力在思维的边界漂游,直到和物一起在能指之池中畅游。空间的主角是石头、稻草人、乐器、刑具、以及死人面具,是不被人推动而会随着雷霆震响而跌落移位的巨石。钢琴在准备下坠,跌碎自己。草垛可能会减少,束身衣可能移位。材料拼接像一段新颖的旋律动机,不断在其作品的各个声部中轮次浮现或消失,从而创造出一种丰盈的秩序感,一种不对称的平衡。

而在《歌剧是一种坏影响》中,沈在束身衣上绣着的昆虫具有灵媒般的力量,这种力量被刺绣这一童话中经常出现的“女性行动”引出:“我喜欢渺小和宏大事物之间的摩擦角力……昆虫对于自然的影响可能跟天气一样重要。”石头进入人体并产生斥力,昆虫引发气象灾变……这些非生命体构成的行动者网强调物的环境本身具有的生命力和可变性(vitality and volatility of things),生命体和非生命体在其中享有同等的地位。在材料的混沌和表面的炼金术中,缺席的不仅仅是情欲的主体——那个理性和束缚、恐惧、拜物紧紧相连,成为主演的女性身体,还有由于身体缺席而无可寻觅的凝视之眼。

the titular tarantula. The title also alludes to the misogynistic fable of a girl bitten by a poisonous spider who dances a tarantella until her death from exhaustion. In *Here Comes the Last of the Great Romantics* (2016), Shen mixes pig's blood with her own and applies it over sheet music placed in the music rack of a piano, this one upright and full-size, with blooms of the fungus tremella fuciformis lining its interior like white rose bouquets. According to the philosopher Byung-Chul Han, artworks that align with the senses of smell and touch instead of sight and hearing undermine that which otherwise appears to be attractive and beautiful¹. The moist textures of blood and fungus, the skull, the spider... all thrust upon you a mixture of feelings that contrast with the pleasure of a smooth surface. The subjectivity of things begins where the pure pleasure of looking (and hearing) ends.

“Perhaps for me piano practice implies a sense of physical discipline which is quite different from [my] sculptures,” Shen has said. Perhaps Roland Barthes's myriad writings on the place of the Other, such as his travel journal vignettes in *The Empire of Signs* (1970), suggest a way of being mesmerized by Shen's installations. You start with subtle

senses of touch, of smell, of hearing, to contemplate on alien things that dawn on you (and now make your carnality) until you become part of the arena. The cast of this carnival theater consists of everything but the real body—the stones, the bugs, the scarecrows, the musical references, the devices for punishment, and death masks.

In *Opera is a Bad Influence*, embroidered bugs invoke the fairytale moments when women access magically transformative power via acts of weaving or sewing. “I like the friction between these lowly creatures and things that seem noble and sublime... The insects also have the capacity to bring great pestilence.”² The loosely connected nonliving things produce a sophisticated network of nonliving “agents” in which objects are endowed with vitality and volatility, and both living and nonliving things are given equal weight. Amidst this alchemy of materials and surfaces, the occult subject of desire—the female body bound up by fear and fetish—is absent but felt; so too the eyes gazing upon her.



Sydeny Shen, *Please Don't Eat Me*, 2015
Dustpan, scorpion specimens, hand broom, dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist



沈心怡,《伟大浪漫主义时代的最终降临》,2016年
制备小型三角钢琴,猪/人类血液,手工纸上墨水
(含纤维素、害虫残骸及研磨人骨)
图片致谢艺术家

Sydeny Shen, *Here Comes The Last of the Great Romantics*, 2016
Petite baby grand piano prepared with rehydrated Tremella fuciformis, blood (pig, artist's own) and drawing ink on handmade paper (cellulose, Tremella fuciformis, Agrocybe aegerita, Nostoc flagelliforme, vermin remains harvested from owl pellets, ground human bone)
Courtesy the artist



●● 沈心怡,《我的名字是鲁本·戴斯》(局部), 2021年
古董篮、布料、树脂, 37 x 37 x 23 厘米
图片致谢艺术家及Vacancy画廊

Sydney Shen, *Myne Name Is Lubbert Das* (detail), 2021
Vintage basket, fabric, flocked resin, 37 x 37 x 23 cm
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Vacancy



装饰作为 “义体”

法语中失音的“h”创造了和本体论(ontology)同音而不同义的“幽灵本体论”(hauntology)一词,从而构成对盎格鲁萨克逊式哲学的一记讥讽的闷锤。字母来到了声音消弭之处。沈心怡的作品在声音的消弭之处唤起余响,那是一种非本体论也非表音学上的标记。

在《Momo是我的化身》《噢痴疯傻热》和《全世界所有的人都是伟大的人》(均为2021)中,铁器打造的刺绣文字成为一段自然下垂的蕾丝花边。而另一侧,四个3D打印尼龙制成的“苍蝇拍”上各自刻着一句话。历史表示这些“苍蝇拍”显然在中世纪具有促进排泄、刺激性欲的作用。而在《我的名字是鲁本·戴斯》(2021)中,艺术家用自己的脸倒模制作了一副提篮中的死亡面具,旁边缀以蕾丝花结。花边蕾丝作为充满女性特质的可爱之物,具有明确的指向性——即被父权凝视爱抚、物化、注视的女性自我。

沈心怡的装置作为(a s)且通过(through)装饰呈现。在看似杂乱无章的符号国度里,装饰成为一种改变时间刻度、掩藏真相、甚至摒弃线性叙事法的技术。和“Hauntology/Ontology”异曲同工的是,装饰主义(ornamentalism)和东方主义(Orientalism)也成了一对谐音梗。程安

●● 沈心怡,《Momo是我的化身》, 2021年
铁、木材, 33 x 200 x 4 厘米
图片致谢艺术家及Vacancy画廊

ORNAMENT AS PROSTHETICS

In French, the “h” is not pronounced, and “Ontology” is a homophone with “Hauntology”—a sarcastic punch to Anglo-Saxon philosophy. A letter marks the place where sound is eliminated. Sydney Shen’s work emits an echo in the place where sound is eliminated, a mark that is neither ontological nor phonological.

In *Moi Même Moitié Le Momo*, *Folly Madness Phrensy Fever*, and *All the World Makes Great Blood* (all 2021), a piece of iron with letters in cutout design cast from a traditional crosscut saw drapes like a real lace. Other hanging objects include a set of four “fly-swatter” pads with decorative fence patterns, but made of 3D printed nylon and velvet ribbons. The pads could be employed as an execution prop for self-punishment. In *Myre Name is Lubbert Das* (2021), a “death mask” that occupies the negative space of the basket is a cast of the artist’s own face—circumscribed by soft lace like that of a doll. Many of Shen’s works are presented as and through ornamentation. Emanating from the creatively chaotic empire of things, ornamentation functions as technology that disrupts linear time and conceals truth. Similar to “Hauntology/Ontology,” “Ornamentalism” and “Orientalism” are almost coined in a punning riddle. Historian and theorist Anne Anlin Cheng asserts that ornamentalism forges the sense of personness through artificial and prosthetic extensions in her critique of western Orientalist shaping of Chinese women. Contextualized as a kind of technology, ornaments (inorganic things) become a precondition for the embodiment of personhood of a woman, and “style” is no

Sydney Shen, *Moi Même Moitié Le Momo*, 2021
Iron, wood, 33 x 200 x 4 cm
Courtesy the Artist and Gallery Vacancy

琳 (Anne Anlin Cheng) 在分析东方主义视角对于华裔女性形象的塑形时指出, 装饰主义通过人工性、义体性的程序来炮制人格性。在装饰主义作为技术的语境中, “风格” (style) 和 “人格” 在自体论层面不再处于对立面; 相反, 前者 (非有机物) 成为后者 (建立在有机物的生物基础上) 存在的前提——装饰成为女性人格具身化的要素, 甚至是性欲倒错的物质证据。和无力发出声音的倒吊之琴一样, 取消了功能的装饰元素鬼魅般地发出人格化的声音。

丝绒和尼龙制成的拍、铁质的缎带, 这些装饰物以装饰本身为刻度, 糅合了当代中产消费文化对于中世纪及维多利亚时期的性倒错的想象。蒸汽朋克将 “做旧” 视为一种粗俗的美学, 用以掩饰 “真实” 的时间标记。与其将这种刻意为之的差时性处理视作复古审美的趋向力, 不如视作幽灵自体论的另一个侧面, 即过去在未来中奏出的幽灵回响。审美的回潮是时间闭环的例证。而这装饰所代表的女性符号的种种衍生定义——自然而非文化、装饰而非功能、死亡本能而非生命驱动、性驱动而非智力驱动——又进入新一轮萃取、发酵、凝结、蒸腾, 减去枝叶, 在寓言或展厅中若隐若现。

当今天的媒体开始贩卖以女性为代言人的高度浪漫化的田园牧歌式的生活想象, 甚嚣尘上的科技进步论叙事将历史勾画为单向度的线性发展时, 沈心怡用物之剧场讲述反直觉的故事。这一次次不同材料的碰撞似乎像是失败的炼金术, 又像是弗兰肯斯坦式的哥特科幻喜剧, 影射场景中尚未完成的动作——女性劳动、尖叫、受辱、引诱的动作。仿佛帘幕合拢, 舞台只留下道具, 演员步入台后换装、聊八卦, 只向观众耳边送来窸窣响声。



more ontologically opposite to “personhood.”³ Like the muted piano, defunctionalized ornamental things manifest as ghostly personified beings.

Velvet flocking, ribbons, stumbling garment—all cheat by mixing contemporary middle-class imaginations of the Victorian or medieval sexual fantasy. Although deliberate confusion of time implies something too nostalgic for digestion, it calls out a suppressed desire for the ghostly echo of the “past” ringing in “now” and “future.”

It also renders various derivative points about being sarcastic with the objects to prefer nature to culture, ornament to function, instinct for death to drive for life, and sex drive to intellectual drive—being pared down to a new cycle of extraction, fermentation, condensation, and transpiration.

This collision between disparate materials at first seems like a failed alchemy or even a Gothic Frankenstein sci-fi comedy brought to a halt by an “unperformed” action by the absent women or sexual inverts—decisive actions such as going mad, seducing/being seduced; and humiliating/being humiliated. Looking as if the stage were left only with props and specters and no actors, giving off only muffled sounds for occasional eavesdropping.

- 1 See “the Aesthetics of the Smooth”, from Byung-Chul Han, *Saving Beauty*, translated by Daniel Steuer.
- 2 “Danse Macabre: Sydney Shen,” Sydney Shen in Conversation with Xin Wang, *Mousse Magazine*, <http://moussemagazine.it/sydney-shen-xin-wang-2021/>
- 3 See Anne Anlin Cheng, “Ornamentalism: A Feminist Theory for the Yellow Woman”, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 44, No. 3.

●● 沈心怡, 《嘶声铭心》(一组四件之一), 2017年
尼龙塑料、天鹅绒、罗缎带, 43 x 15 x 0.25 厘米/件
图片致谢艺术家及Vacancy画廊

Sydney Shen, *I Want My Scream to Count*, 2017
3D-printed nylon, velvet flocking, grosgrain ribbon,
43 x 15 x 0.25 cm, one of the set of 4
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Vacancy



●● 沈心怡, 《原初(神降少女)》, 2021年
古董篮、布料、聚氨酯泡沫塑料, 69 x 28 x 16 厘米
图片致谢艺术家及Vacancy画廊

Sydney Shen, *1st Knowing (Manifesteange Metamorphose temps de fille)*, 2021
Vintage basket, fabric, high density urethane foam, 69 x 28 x 16 cm
Courtesy the artist and Gallery Vacancy