



认识你自己——如果

Know Thyself—if the Discourse Doesn't Fit

聂小依
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上海老小区里的植物，2021年10月
图片由本文作者提供

Plants in an old bloc in Shanghai,
October 2021
Photo by the author

¹
[日] 和辻哲郎，《风土：人间学的考察》（北京：东方出版社，2017），pp. 123-27。最早出版：《风土——人间学的考察》（东京：岩波书店，1935）。

我

I

去年十月不像今年这样燥热，隔离近半，从半开的窗户探身出去能嗅到桂花香气，这阵香气绵延了将近一个月。站在上海街头时，甜腻随风窜入鼻腔，令人浑身一颤，为身在湿润温暖的中国南方而雀跃。日本学者和辻哲郎受到海德格尔的影响发展出了“风土学”，颇为本质主义地谈论人们被气候、地形、水文孕育，也投身于自然、在其中显现和观察自身和整体的“人”。中国人的性格，被他划作季风与沙漠的叠加——他在昭和二年（1927年）的上海目睹了北伐战争里的中国人，即便共产党人的头颅被挂在电线杆上、老百姓没有政府指望，也“悠然不迫”地照常度日。¹当时的街头或许和现在的街头一样：要站在街头，才会意识到在微博上的地狱新闻和政治性抑郁之外，还有一片风土——桂花盛开，卖玉兰手串的阿嬷提篮兜卖，在许许多多的门口，我和保安心照不宣地摆摆手机、不改颜色。

出隔离的第二天，我和伙伴跑去明当代美术馆听论坛，主题是“年轻的机构”，国内的朋友说，你刚回来，这论坛是个了解国内生态近况的好机会。穿过投影仪、显示器和帘幕的阵法，猫身坐进美术馆楼梯改成的观众席，两旁墙壁上滚动着标语突然抢入视野，每个字都在暗光中闪烁不停：

……尽管你看不见，但我们依然紧紧相连。欢迎进入流动相依、关怀社会的替代时空，尽管你看不见，但我们依然紧紧相连。欢迎进入流动相依、关怀社会的替代时空，尽管你看不见……



“年轻的机构”论坛现场，明当代美术馆，上海，2021年10月10日
图片由本文作者提供

The forum “Young Institutes”
at Ming Contemporary Art
Museum, Shanghai,
October 10, 2021
Photo by the author

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雷电所公众号的最新推送中仍然定义为“非营利的艺术机构”。《雷电, OK! AR 虚拟首饰内测邀请》, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/VWtK-m59JEUOWC-MEFR0geXw>, 2022 年 11 月 11 日。

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Merriam-Webster 辞典中对 institute 的定义是“an organization for the promotion of a cause; an educational institution and especially one devoted to technical fields; a usually brief intensive course of instruction on selected topics relating to a particular field……”

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原文为“Longmarch space is not so much a gallery as a center, a base, and a work station that looks to connect the art world with Chinese society, and to connect China with the world. The space functions as a “curatorial laboratory” dedicated to the fundamental questions of the relationship between curating, display and artistic creation, between practice and discourse, between objects and text, and between audience and artists.” ‘Homepage’, 25000 Cultural Transmission Center, 2005 <<https://web.archive.org/web/20051129031831/http://www.longmarchspace.com/english/homepage.htm>> [accessed 17 November 2022].

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叶滢,《窑变 798》(北京: 新星出版社, 2010), p. 72。

眩晕。字条喋喋不休,乌托邦气氛漫溢。口号跳过了“我”,从“你”跳到了“我们”。这场活动的组织方“雷电所”是家科技艺术策划和艺术家孵化平台,由上海风语筑文化科技股份有限公司赞助。雷电所是明当代当时展览的组织者,也是这场论坛的召集人。我好奇在今天大陆艺术和商业跨界的语境里,实践者为何仍然执着用“机构”或者“新型机构”这样的词汇。²《辞海》说“机构”“泛指机关、团体或其他工作单位”,但“艺术机构”里作为名称的机构一词常常对应的是英文里的 institute——韦伯斯特辞典指“具有特定目标、常和某个事业(cause)或研究领域相关的组织”³。“cause”作为“事业与目标”之意时隐含着强烈的价值认同。艺术机构,隐含的意思是去问艺术的方式及其目标,与我们的生活有何关联。

2019 年的冬天,时任长征计划(Long March Project)总监的梁中蓝(Theresa Leung)在 798 的东八时区反问我,“我们总在讨论长征计划是不是一个机构,可是在大陆,你觉得有真正的机构吗?”在 2010 年代的语境里,长征计划因为与长征空间画廊共享资源而需要为自己的非营利性辩护、争取被识别为“机构”,一种为了公益、而非私利的形态。再往前倒十多年,长征空间的前身两万五千里文化传播中心却能堂而皇之地展露自身的复杂。2005 年,长征的英文网站上如此描述,“与其说长征是间画廊,不如说它是一个中心、基地和 workstation,期待连接艺术世界与中国社会、中国与世界。”⁴ 卢杰当时用“黑白红”描述中国的艺术生态和长征的位置——“一个地下独立的,我把它叫做黑道;国际机构和老外是白道;另外还有一个红道,就是美术馆和美术学院。无论是哪个结构,彼此暧昧,彼此混合,彼此依赖。[···]我们在这三个层面都在工作。”⁵ 语气里充盈着在不同系统间穿梭和不被规则驯服的自得。要想成事,创业者得从各处借力。各套服装、一身斑驳,恰是本土颜色。当时,这里还有一些希望,希望中国的暧昧不清、鱼龙混杂的方式有朝一日可以替代西方那个干干净净、恒久不变的系统。

恍惚中,我听见论坛现场的一位画廊主说,她实践的新颖之处在于结合了市场和研究、实践和理论,画廊并不屈服于某一个领域的规则。那一刻我恍然以为自己回到了十几年的两万五千里文化传播中心(我太年轻了,并没到过那个现场)。我忍不住想,是否因为太迅速地成功,曾经的“替代”生态才没有变成今天普遍的语言。2008 年之后,当长征恰到好处的反叛令人困惑时,长征空间渐渐变为正经的商业画廊,策划、研究和实验项目划入了长征计划,四不像收束成“画廊”与“机构”两副干净面孔,鱼龙混杂潜入水面。在这次论坛里,有艺术家创办的想像力学实验室、疫情爆发后上海出现的“栏杆外”和 33ml off space、时代美术馆的外延项目媒体实验室和社区实验室、展览讲座留学咨询兼顾的“副本”……正如这场论坛的名字——年轻的“机构”——用引号来表明这些实践与机构的不同。它们的相聚缘于一种否定,即都不是白盒子美术馆。

可正像梁中蓝反问的,干净、整洁、稳固的“机构”几乎只存在于观念当中。从泥泞的土地上生长出的事物,哪个不需要找到自己的谋生之法和叙事?(回国后,最确切的有关“机构”的谈论,是有位刚刚认识的年轻朋友介绍自己“在机构工作”,我很亢奋地追问,想跟她讨论“机构批判”在国内的水服不服。她略微带着尴尬解释,并不是美术馆或者基金会,而是留学咨询机构。)即便不踏入“机构”和“替代”的非此即彼,这些论坛里的实践仍然有其自称——公司、空间、画廊、杂志、工作室、平台、社区、团体、组织、俱乐部,或在其自身语境里的“机构”……对这些事物来说,美术馆或者纯净的”机构“在它们的视野里吗,是它们的对立面吗?如果不事先施加一个”替代“,这些实践会如何认识和描述自身?是否还会存在一个共同的称谓,即“我们”?

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Watsuji, Tetsuro, *Climate and Culture: anthropological investigation* (Beijing: Dong Fang Publishing, 2017), pp. 123–27. First edition: *Climate and Culture: anthropological investigation* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1935).

Last October was not as warm as this year. Halfway through my quarantine, I could smell the scent of osmanthus as I reached out from my half-open window, which had been floating in the air for almost a month now. The sweetness easily slipped into the nose with the wind as one stood on the streets of Shanghai, sending a shiver down the spine, a shiver of joy for living in the humid and warm region of southern China. Under the influence of Heidegger, Japanese scholar Watsuji Tetsuro developed the study of “Climate” (*fudo*), in which he discussed in a quite essentialist manner about how human beings, being nurtured by the climate, geography and hydrology, also synchronized themselves with the nature, revealing and observing themselves in it. The character of the Chinese people was classified by him as a combination of monsoon and desert—he witnessed how Chinese people spent their days in Shanghai in 1927 during the Northern Expedition launched by the National Revolutionary Army: they went on with their lives “unhurriedly” even when the heads of communists were hung on telephone poles and there was no government to count on.¹ The streets were perhaps the same then as they are now: one has to stand on the streets to realize that beyond the hellish news and political depression on Weibo, there is another landscape – osmanthus is in full bloom; old ladies are selling bracelets made from yulan magnolias in their baskets; and in front of enumerable doorways, the security guards and I wave our smartphones at each other tacitly, with no words or expressions exchanged.

The day after our quarantine ended, my friend and I attended a forum at McaM (Ming Contemporary Art Museum). The theme was “Young Institutions”. One friend in China said that, since I just returned, this forum was a great chance to learn about the industry in recent years. After I passed through the magic circle of projectors, monitors, and curtains, and crawled into the stairway-turned-audience-seat, I suddenly noticed the slogans scrolling on the walls on both sides: each single character was flashing in dim light:

... Even though you can’t see, we are closely connected to each other. Welcome to the alternative universe of fluid interdependence and caring society, although you can’t see, we are closely connected to each other. Welcome to the alternative universe of fluid interdependence and caring society, although you can’t see, we are closely connected to each other...

Vertigo. The words droned on, and the utopian atmosphere overflowed. The slogan skipped the “I” and jumped from “you” to “we”. The organizer of this event, Raiden Institute, is a platform for digital art curatorial and artist incubation, sponsored by Shanghai FengYuZhu Culture and Technology Co. Raiden Institute was the organizer of the exhibition held at McaM at the time, as well as the convener of this forum. I was curious as to why

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The latest Wechat post of Raiden Institute still describes itself as a “non-profit art institution”.

“Raiden, OK! AR virtual jewelry Alpha testing invitation”, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/WtKm-59JEUOWC-MEFR0geXw>, Nov. 11, 2022.

3

The definition of “institute” in *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary* is “an organization for the promotion of a cause; an educational institution and especially one devoted to technical fields; a usually brief intensive course of instruction on selected topics relating to a particular field.....”

4

“Longmarch space is not so much a gallery as a center, a base, and a work station that looks to connect the art world with Chinese society, and to connect China with the world. The space functions as a “curatorial laboratory” dedicated to the fundamental questions of the relationship between curating, display and artistic creation, between practice and discourse, between objects and text, and between audience and artists.” ‘Homepage’, 25000 Cultural Transmission Center, 2005. <<https://web.archive.org/web/20051129031831/http://www.longmarchspace.com/english/homepage.htm>> [accessed 17 November 2022].

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Ye Ying, Kiln Change 798 (Beijing: Xin Xing Publishing, 2010), p. 72.

practitioners still insist on using the term “institution” or “new institution” in today’s context of cross-boundary art and business practices in mainland China.² According to *Cihai*, an authoritative Chinese dictionary, the word *ji gou* (机构, institution) “generally refers to an institution, group or other work unit”. When the word “*ji gou*”, acting as a title in the phrase “*yi shu ji gou* (艺术机构, art institute)”, it often corresponds to the English word “institute”, which *Webster’s Dictionary* explains as “an organization for the promotion of a cause”.³ The “cause”, when conveying the meaning of “cause and purpose”, implies a strong sense of identification. The art institute, by implication, inquires in what way the method and purpose of art relate to our lives.

In the winter of 2019, Theresa Leung, then director of the Long March Project (LMP), asked me rhetorically in the East 8 time zone of 798, “We were always debating whether LMP is an institution, but do you think there is a real institution in mainland China?” In the context of the 2010s, LMP had to justify its non-profit status and seek to be identified as an “institution”, a form of public service rather than private profit, because it shared resources with the gallery, Long March Space. Meanwhile, more than a decade further back, the predecessor of Long March Space, 25,000 Miles Cultural Communication Center, was able to display its complexity in public, as described on the English website of Long March in 2005: “Rather than a gallery, Long March is a center, a base, and a workstation, that looks to connect the art world with Chinese society, China with the world.”⁴ At the time, Lu Jie described the Chinese art world and the position of Long March as such, “an underground independent one, which I call the black way; international institutions and foreigners are the white way; yet there is a red way as well, which is art museums and art academies. Across the obscured boundaries, all the structures intermingle with each other, and rely on each other. [...] We work along all three ways.”⁵ Lu’s tone of speech was filled with the self-congratulation of trespassing across different systems and being untamed by the rules. Right. To make things happen, entrepreneurs must borrow forces from wherever they can. The various mottled and patched outfits are just the colors of the local environment. At the time, there was still some hope here, that China’s ambiguous and loose approach could one day replace the clean and everlasting system of the Western world.

In a trance, I heard a gallerist at the forum say that the novelty of her practice was the combination of market and research, practice and theory, because the gallery should not bend to the rules of a particular field. At that moment, I suddenly thought I was back to the 25,000 Miles Culture Communication Center more than a decade ago (I was too young to experience it). I couldn’t help but think, whether the past ecology of “alternative” didn’t become a common knowledge and discourse because we succeeded too fast. After 2008, when the just right amount of rebellion displayed by Long March got people confused, Long March Space gradually

became a proper commercial gallery, with the curatorial, research and experimental projects subsumed into LMP, and the chimera was divided into two clean faces: gallery and institution. The rest sunk into the water. Back to this forum, there were artist-founded project Imagokinetics, Pararailing and 33ml off space, which emerged in Shanghai after the outbreak of the pandemic; the media lab and community lab of the Times Museum outreach program; “Instance”, which offers exhibitions, lectures, and study abroad consultation... Just like the name of the forum, young “institutions”, the quotation marks distinguished these practices from institutions. The concourse of them was the result of the denial, that none of them are white box museums.

However, just as Theresa Leung’s rhetorical question implied, the idea of a clean, tidy, solid “institution” exists almost exclusively in theory. Anything that grew out of the muddy ground must find its own way of making a living and its own narrative. (The most relevant conversation I had about “institution” after returning to China, was when a young friend I had just met introduced herself as “working in an institution”, and I asked her about it in excitement, trying to discuss with her whether “institutional critique” fit into the Chinese context. She explained, with some embarrassment, that it was not an art museum or foundation, but a study-abroad consulting institution.) Even without stepping into the either/or situation of “institution” and “the alternative”, these practices in the forum had their own titles anyways: company, space, gallery, magazine, studio, platform, community, group, organization, club, or an “institution” within its own context... Are art museums or pure “institutions” on their horizon? Are those seen as their antithesis? How would these practices perceive and describe themselves if the idea of “the alternative” was not imposed in advance? Would there still be a common name, the “we”?



遵义国际策展会议，“长征：一个行走中的视觉展示”策划项目组成部分，2002 年致谢长征计划

Zunyi International Curating Symposium, a part of the curatorial project “Long March: A Walking Visual Display,” 2002 Courtesy Long March Project

与我无关

Nothing to do with me

2015 年，我刚刚到伦敦，在策展系读硕士。第二个月，我跟马来西亚的同学搭档策展人奥奎·恩维佐（Okwui Enwezor）的一篇文章，《后殖民星座》（“The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition”）⁶。从北京移居伦敦，我的身份认同从山东人变成了中国人；和马来西亚同学 Zena 的搭档被我解读为亚洲内部的亲密。Zena 带我远程采访了马来西亚艺术家舒希·苏莱曼（Shooshie Sulaiman），舒希身上的马来西亚和华人血缘让我确认了我和 Zena 之间的联系，并且，让我以为因为舒希，我便可以与马来亚、砂拉越和沙巴的英日殖民历史相接，也算满足了课程里的“后殖民”。课上，临近讲演结束，老师突然转向我，“你在中国的后殖民经验是什么？”（“What is your post-colonial experience in China?”）那个问题让我困惑——我，后殖民，和中国？这困惑如同突然把我扔到了北京晚高峰时的地铁车厢里，被挤到双脚悬浮、落了眼镜、与四周的人类摩肩接踵、嘴张开又闭合。我在中国怎么会有后殖民经验呢，殖民者和帝国主义早就被毛泽东赶走了。要有什么“后”的经验，难道不是后社会主义？

那一刻的失语一直在我身体里回旋，为什么一位英国策展人会认为我有“后殖民”经验，为什么我以为“后殖民”在亚洲之内、中国之外。一开始，我当然会觉得问题施加于我就有暴力：虽然后殖民反对均质化的西方、整体性的艺术史，但我的生命经验是否也被“后殖民”这个词语冠名并且均质化了？可是、我也并不觉得老师是居高临下地发问，他并不是赶时髦的理论家，做了印度手工艺的研究很多年，“后殖民”对他来说更近乎通往西方之外的无数甬道。

这之后，或许是因为我在一个前殖民帝国里生存了几年，时不时在 Youtube 上听对斯皮瓦克（Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak）晦涩文章的讲解，或许因为我终于有了些流民经验，渐渐地，我终于在“后殖民”的时空错置、叙事破碎、残暴横生、无可言说里读到了自己——中国也有这些，在被称为“（后）社会主义”的现实里，也有这些。这是自己被重述的阅读过程，而我逐渐理解了使用不同词汇的人的欲望。这似乎比读懂斯皮瓦克来说，更为重要。后殖民、去殖民要撼动知识和常识的构建方式，让穷困之人意识到自己已拥有隐秘的知识、创造了独特世界。这种对认知正义的追求，常让我想那句“解放思想，实事求是”是否可以和“后殖民”碰面、理解对方？第三世界没有共享同一段历史，全球南方只是一个相对位置，而不同现场之间的倾轧和反抗，若要彼此理解，也需要仰赖翻译，有时候是理解对方在具体经历什么、为什么要说话。

2008 年广州三年展主题就叫“与后殖民说再见”。标题如此直接，几乎是大陆当代艺术界最“从中国出发”回应国际议题的一次尝试：它点出 1990 年代开始中国艺术家对西方话语“霸权”的怨怼，也把生长在大陆的人们（如我）与后殖民话语缺乏情感与认知联系的情形挑到明面。那届庞大的三年展并未花费力气向大陆的艺术工作者解析“后殖民”这一词语、流派、学科，或者讨论它为何会成功、为何中国会不在其中。三年展的真正靶子是国际当代艺术系统中的话语权力。主策展人高士明说，“在我看来，后殖民主义、多元文化主义给当代艺术界带来的一个主要问题就是艺术的政治化”。⁷而这些主义逐渐成为一种意识形态，“使自己陷入一种机械、呆板的‘漫无

⁸ 《多元文化主义的限度》，《与后殖民说再见：第三届广州三年展》，王璜生、高士明、Sarat Maharaj、张颂仁 编（杭州：中国美术学院出版社，2008），p. 15。

边界的政治正确性’，后果是“将当代艺术空间置于一种审查之下”。⁸“审查”指的是国际当代艺术界让政治和社会议题先行。

那么，要号召一种去政治化的艺术吗？三年展强调自己并非要淘汰“后殖民”，而是希望刷新和挖掘诸如“身份”和“他者”这些已经僵化的观念的可能性。但如何挖掘、如何做到三年展的另一个口号“从亚洲出发”？三年展调用的仍然是惯常的工具箱——展览、放映会、画册、委派创作，在不同地点召集研讨、编纂读本、邀请艺术家和哲学家加入。如果以“后殖民”为议题的西方双年展和文献展没有让中国艺术家们生出参与感，那么运用相似方法的“与后殖民说再见”能否让中国艺术家和大陆之外的参与者转变？这届三年展示例了“中国作为问题”，却没有“自己作为方法”：人们尚未冒着可能犯错的风险开始谈论自己的生活 and 感受，尚未阅读真正的人的经历和体验。否则，阅读斯皮瓦克谈到的“庶民”（subaltern）的不可见性，一定能让策展人和艺术家们走出三年展，想起中国的女性、乡村、农民工和底层人。“向后殖民说再见”仍然是艺术系统内部的问题，甚至是别人的的问题。

我和“后殖民”和解，是因为 2019 年底读到了一份资料，拉希德·阿拉因（Rasheed Araeen）在 1980 年代创办了 Black Umbrella，为在英国生活的非白人艺术家举办展览、建立档案、出版画册。我意外地发现拉希德所说的“Black”不仅仅是今天意义里的黑人，而是包括了所有非白人——来自亚洲、非洲、加勒比和所有混血的、在西方社会被遮蔽和遗忘了的人……按这样的定义，我也是黑人。这个震惊一直跟随着我。半年以后，2020 年的初夏，我在伦敦独自跟随 Black Lives Matter 游行队伍前进时，心里念叨着这句话，我也是黑色的。四周深深浅浅的肤色一同前涌，人们敲锣打鼓、齐声歌唱，有人组织大家齐声喊出口号。那时候英国的第一轮封城已经过去，游行里鲜少人戴口罩，但我还穿着透明雨衣、戴着口罩和橡胶手套。每当有人狐疑地看着我，我会凑近 ta，轻声说，“yeah, I am Asian, and I feel black.”

In 2015, I had just arrived in London to do my MA in Curating Contemporary Art. The next month, I paired with a Malaysian classmate Zena to present on an essay by curator Okwui Enwezor, “The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition”.⁶ Having moved from Beijing to London, my identity shifted from a Shandong-ese to a Chinese; I interpreted my collaboration with Zena as one with an intra-Asian intimacy. Zena took me on a remote interview with the Malaysian artist Shooshie Sulaiman, whose Malaysian and Chinese origins confirmed my sense of connection with Zena. At the same time, this made me think that because of Shooshie, I was now able to connect with the British and Japanese colonial history of Malaysia, Sarawak, and Sabah, therefore completing the “post-colonial” aspect of the course. In the class, toward the end of the presentation, the tutor suddenly turned to me and asked, “What is your post-colonial experience in China?” The question confused me—me, post-colonial, China? This confusion made me feel like being thrown into a subway car during the evening rush hour in Beijing all of a sudden, squeezed until my feet left the ground, my glasses fell, with my shoulders pressed against those of others. My mouth opened and closed. How could I have had a post-colonial experience in China when the colonizers had

⁶ Okwui Enwezor, “The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition”, *Research in African Literatures*, 34.4 (2003), pp. 57–82.

⁷ 高士明，《“后殖民之后”的观察和预感》，《与后殖民说再见：第三届广州三年展》，王璜生、高士明、Sarat Maharaj、张颂仁 编（杭州：中国美术学院出版社，2008），pp. 44–51。

⁶ Enwezor, Okwui, “The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition”, *Research in African Literatures*, 34.4 (2003), 57–82.

long been driven out by Mao Zedong? What kind of “post” experience could there be, if not post-socialism?

That moment of dissonance kept reverberating in my body. Why would a British intellectual think that I had a “post-colonial” experience? Why would I consider “post-colonial” to be somewhere in Asia but China? At first, of course, I felt that there was violence inflicted when this question was raised toward me: although post-colonialism opposes a homogenized Western world and a holistic art history, was my life experience also represented and homogenized by the phrase “postcolonial”? However, I did not think that my tutor was condescending. He was not a trendy theorist. He had been doing research on Indian crafts for many years. “Postcolonial” for him was more like a myriad of pathways away from the Western world.

Since then, perhaps thanks to the years I spent in a former colonial empire, or the Youtube channels that elucidated Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s obscure articles, or perhaps due to the nomad experience that I finally gained, I started to see myself in the asynchronous, fragmented, brutal and unspeakable “post-colonial” narrative—which existed in China as well, in the reality that was called “(post)socialism”. It was a process of reading that retold my own narrative. I gradually came to understand the desires and feelings of people who used different vocabularies. This seemed to be more significant than understanding Spivak. Post-colonialism and decolonization are about shaking up the way all knowledge and common sense were constructed, so that the poor can realize that they already possess hidden knowledge and have created unique worlds. This quest for cognitive justice often reminded me of the quote “emancipate the mind, seek truth from facts”. Can we unite with “post-colonialism” and understand each other? The Third World do not share the same history, and the Global South is just a relevant position. We need to rely on translation to make sense of the invasions and revolts happening on different sites, sometimes to understand what others are going through exactly, and sometimes why they are speaking.

The theme of the 2008 Guangzhou Triennale was “Farewell to Post-Colonialism”. The title was so direct. It was almost the most “China-based” attempt to respond to an international issue in the mainland contemporary art world: it pointed out the resentment of Chinese artists towards the “hegemony” of the Western discourse since the 1990s and brought to the surface the lack of emotional and cognitive connection between people growing up in mainland China (like me) and the post-colonial discourse. The huge Triennale did not extend any effort to explain the term, genre, or discipline of “post-colonialism”, or to discuss why it was successful and why China was not part of it. The real target of the Triennale was to attain power of discourse in the international contemporary art system. The lead curator Gao Shiming said, “In my opinion, one of main problems that post-colonialism and multi-culturalism have brought to the contemporary art world is the

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Gao, Shiming, “Observations and Premonitions of ‘After Post-Colonialism’”, “Farewell to Post-Colonialism: 3rd Guangzhou Triennale”, edited by Wang Huangsheng, Gao Shiming, Sarat Maharaj, Zhang Songren (Hangzhou: China Academy of Art Press, 2008), pp. 44–51.

8
“The Limit of Multi-Culturalism”, Farewell to Post-Colonialism: 3rd Guangzhou Triennale, edited by Wang Huangsheng, Gao Shiming, Sarat Maharaj, Zhang Songren (Hangzhou: China Academy of Art Press, 2008), pp.15.

politicization of art”.⁷ These influences gradually became an ideology that “lapsed itself into a mechanical, dull, ‘rambling political correctness’, with the consequence of ‘subjecting the contemporary art space to a kind of censorship’”.⁸ “Censorship” referred to the priority that the international contemporary art world gave to political and social issues.

Then, should we call for a depoliticized art? The Triennale emphasized that its aim was not to eliminate “post-colonialism”, but to refresh and explore further possibilities of ossified concepts as “identity” and “otherness”. But how? How could they achieve the other slogan of the Triennale, “Departure from Asia”? The Triennale still invoked the usual toolbox: exhibitions, screenings, catalogues, commissions, seminars at various sites, compiling pamphlets, inviting artists and philosophers to join them. If Western biennales and documenta on the topic of “post-colonialism” had not generated a sense of participation among Chinese artists, could “Farewell to Post-Colonialism”, which employed similar methods, transform them as well as participants outside the mainland? This Triennale demonstrated “China as an issue”, but without employing “the self as method”: people had not yet begun to talk about their own lives and feelings at the risk of mistakes, nor had they learnt real human experiences and histories of the others. Otherwise, reading Spivak’s discussion of the invisibility of “subaltern” must have been able to lead curators and artists out of the Triennale and start thinking about the women, the rural, migrant workers and the underclass in China. “Farewell to Post-Colonialism” remained a problem within the art system, even a problem of someone else.

My reconciliation with “post-colonialism” was at the end of 2019 when I came across an archive about Rasheed Araeen establishing Black Umbrella in the 1980s. Araeen organized exhibitions, created archives, and published catalogues for non-white artists living in the UK. I was surprised to discover that Rasheed’s idea of “Black” included not only black people in today’s sense, but all non-white people—from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and all multiracial people, those overshadowed and obliterated in the Western society... By this definition, I am also black. This shock has followed me. Six months later, in the early summer of 2020, as I marched alone among the Black Lives Matter parade in London, I recited the words, I too am black. All around me, light and dark skin tones swarmed together. There were people hitting drums, playing music, and singing in unison. Someone organized everyone to chant slogans in unison. By then the first round of quarantine in the UK had passed and few people wore masks in the parade, but I was still wearing my transparent raincoat, mask, and rubber gloves. Whenever someone looked at me suspiciously, I would approach them and whisper, “Yeah, I am Asian, and I feel black.”

身形 Body form

吴山专曾经出过一本小说《今天下午停水》，是本时空被折叠、穿刺、场景漫漶的自传。但叙述者却似乎并不迷狂，场景里总有确凿的细节，尤其是汉字的排列。对话和字句甚至因为过于确凿而开始分裂、增生、杂交，在某个时刻，字句掌管了生活，犹如天神律令——

“今天下午停水” 对人是**有涵（含）义的**。还在小的时候，我与我同年龄的小孩一样，肩膀上就有了**红肿的烙印（不是电影《渡江侦察记》中扛枪后的烙印）**。我有理由想念那根扁担和那两个木桶。扁担上写着“将文化大革命进行到底”；木桶上写着（防水的）“打到 xxx 年月日”（别的地方发生什么）。我不但为自己家挑水，还为“五保户”张大娘挑水，响应学习雷锋好榜样的全国运动。那时，夏天的水龙头是上锁的。⁹

现成物曾构成杜尚的现实。从这本小说来看，对吴山专来说，现成物远远比不上“现成字”威力巨大。现成字并不一定需要在游行中通过被喊成口号才能进入人的生命。作为通知、证明和标语的现成字，创造真实、消灭欲望，在人类的生活里中逐渐背离意义、成为形式。¹⁰ 吴山专和朋友们在 1986 年做的那场展览《75% 红 20% 黑 5% 白》里布满了字，犹如一片猩红中散落的义肢。吴山专站在被红底黑字的大字报铺



吴山专，《今天下午停水》
(又名：《大字报 红色幽默系列 赤字——
长篇小说 <今天下午停水> 第二章若干自然段》)，1986 年
装置，墨彩及广告彩、宣纸，
约 3.5 × 4 × 6 米。
致谢艺术家、费大为档案及亚洲文献库。

Wu Shanzhuan, *Today No Water*
(also known as *The Big Characters (Dazibao), Red Humor Series, and Red Character – Several Natural Paragraphs from the Second Chapter of the Novel – Today No Water*), 1986
Installation, poster color and ink on rice paper, approx. 3.5 × 4 × 6 m
Courtesy the artist, Fei Dawei Archive and Asia Art Archive

天盖地的时空里，目视镜头、与字互文。他创造伪字和赤字，让字不可表意，但谁能说这些字不是幸运儿？文化大革命的狂热标语、80 年代“读书热”里的西方哲学翻译、90 年代市场经济里的广告和合同，字始终承受着意义的独裁。字和人和物，都因形式而被利用、身不由己。要获得自由，必须先从这一身形中逃出。

沈莘的作品《四条道》（Four Tracks）里，四组不同时空的中国铁道工人遭遇了彼此。ta 们开口说话了，因为自己的队伍里有人死去、有人消失，不知道是哪队人带来了灾厄。《四条道》是一场三幕剧，但脱离了任何具体的人物和场景，没有种族、肤色、年龄、体态的线索，观众仅仅能在屏幕上阅读句子，每句话从一片纯色的背景上浮现。点击屏幕，背景变色、句子消失，有时要屏幕变色几次，沉默一会儿，才出现新的语句。几种色彩的轮换中，破碎的对话行进着，读者可以拼凑出这里的中国工人（Chinese）来自埃塞俄比亚的奥罗比亚（Oromia）、美国的内华达和犹他州、新疆的库尔勒和喀什——或许 ta 们是如今正在非洲经济援助的中国工人，1860 年代在美国修筑太平洋铁路的华人移民，1974 年修建南疆铁路的生产建设兵团和当地回民。¹¹ 这个莫名其妙的空间因人的聚集而变化着样貌，如坠迷梦的人们不断区分着“你们”和“我们”。中文的台词简单又拗口，有时带着错别字，让人想起中文被使用时的种种口气与形态：

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沈莘的邮件，2022 年 12 月 1 日。

“泛亚洲铁路是我们的时代遗留给你们的礼物
.....

但你们更贪心啊，盯着比人的土地，占为己有时也没看出什么羞耻惭愧

.....

我们跟白人殖民地的出发点是平等的啊

.....

也可以说是我们失败了

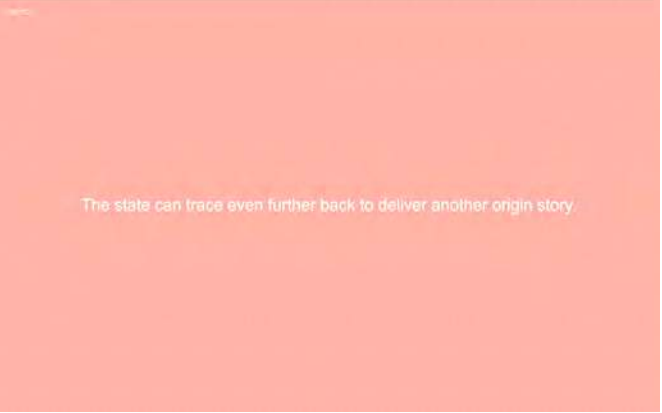
.....

咱们应该继续找人

.....”

沈莘，《四条道》（截图），2021 年
《四条道》由广州时代美术馆委任制作，首次发表于美术馆期刊第二期
《亲密星图》（2021 年 4 月）
致谢艺术家与广州时代美术馆

Shen Xin, *Four Tracks*
(screenshot), 2021
Commissioned by Times
Museum as part of the Journal
‘Constellation of Intimacies’
(Issue 2, April 2021)
Courtesy the artist and Times
Museum





鸥飞鸿，上海推手活动的招贴（人在哪儿，哪儿就有推手），2022 年

Ou Feihong, flyer for Tui-shou in Shanghai (it happens where people travel), 2022

对话并不连贯，或许是被风吞噬了。沈莘把剧场削减到零落的语句，把每个角色削减至一块颜色。在语气、口音、停顿一起被抽象之后，语言的暴力和局限，以及人对语言的巨大依赖和这一依赖带来的陷阱也暴露了出来。沈莘并没有再与某个词语或者身份纠缠，ta 在“对话”这一文体中暴露出流动的误解与理解。在这片迷蒙的风土中，不同的身份和语言逐渐污染了彼此，如同色块在变幻中成为一片光斑。

今年春天，我从小区围栏中一个狭窄的缝隙侧身钻出、逃离了上海。到了六月，广州已经炙热如烤，但我借住的房东一定要拉我和同伴去晓港公园。在一棵巨大的榕树下，一群年轻人，汗衫、瑜伽服和长裙交错着，没什么人聊天，也没有刻意沉默。几个人闭着眼睛、颈椎旋转、晃动着像新鲜面条一样垂下的双臂。有人说一声，“我跟你推吧！”，就面对面靠近、双脚前后分开、彼此膝盖互抵，然后两人的胳膊粘连着、旋转着，试图让对方失去平衡、脚步离地……这是高压俱乐部组织的练功，说是俱乐部，但不需要拜师或者引荐人，每个人都可以来这里松肩、松身和推手。在屡屡被推出我和对方组成的圆形、又总被拉住之后，我意识到这是几个月来最轻松的与人相处的场景。一个人的衣着、外形、样貌在这个过程里，变得太过微不足道。搭上胳膊与手臂，闭眼，重要的是倾听对方内在的力量，要往哪里去，要在哪儿消失。跟随着对方的进退和旋转，我们的名字都不再重要。忍不住讲话的我们说的是“啊？”“哎呀，我要倒了！”“嘿嘿”——语言被拉回此时此刻，我在失去平衡、却也被伸手拉住。我们形状在一起变化。

在《四条道》的最后一幕，灾厄尚未消除，但沈莘藏了一句与何去何从无关的解救法：真诚遭遇时，你我在眼神中看到彼此的痛苦（In a sincere encounter, you meet each other's pain in the eyes）。当话语不合、无法起效时，你和我仍然分享着此时此刻。最后的对话里，人们不再使用宏大的词汇，开始分享对方的食物，异域的水果和香料进入了肠胃。肚子变圆了，身体的地貌在悄悄改变。

“我”和我的语言都不是固定的，正像我的肚皮和梦境。

Wu Shanzhuan once published a novel, *Today No Water*. It is an autobiography in which time and space are collapsed and punctured, and scenes are riddled. However, the narrator didn't seem erratic. There were always exact and solid details in the scenes, particularly the sequence of Chinese characters. The dialogues and words even started to divide, multiply and hybridize because they were too exact, and then they took control of the life at some moment, like god's decree—

“Today No Water” has a meaning to people. Since I was a kid, I had red and swollen imprints on my shoulders, just like any kid my age (not those from carrying a gun in the movie *River Scout* [*Du Jiang Zhen Cha Ji*]).

I have reasons to miss the stretcher and the two barrels. On the stretcher was written ‘Carry out the Cultural Revolution to the end’; on the barrels (in waterproof paint) ‘Fight until xxx year, month and day’ (what happened elsewhere). I not only carried water for my own family, but also for auntie Zhang, a ‘five guarantee household’, in response to the national campaign to follow the role model Lei Feng.

At that time, the taps were locked in summer.⁹

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Wu Shanzhuan/International Red Humor, *Today No Water* (2008), pp. 9–10.

10

“For me, reality is what I learned. Please read the newspaper. I compared what was written in the newspaper to what I was surrounded with, and I realized that what was written in the newspaper was ‘real’. Later I discovered that this ‘reality’ was based on the destroyal of whatever else that could become the desire of real human beings.” *Today No Water* (2008), p. 211–212.

The ready-made objects used to constitute Duchamp's reality. From this novel, for Wu Shanzhuan, ready-made objects were far less powerful than “ready-made words”. Ready-made words did not necessarily need to be uttered as slogans in a procession in order to enter the life of a person. Notices, proofs and written slogans, ready-made words created realities and destroyed desires. They gradually departed from meanings and became forms in the everyday life.¹⁰ The exhibition *75% Red 20% Black 5% White* organised by Wu Shanzhuan and his friends in 1986 was covered with words, like prosthetic limbs scattered in the swamp of scarlet color. Wu Shanzhuan stood in the space filled with dazibao, large black characters on red backgrounds, his eyes looking straight into the camera lens, and intertextualizing with the characters. He created pseudo-characters and falsely written characters, to make the text incomprehensible. But who could say that these characters were not lucky? The slogans of the frenzied Cultural Revolution, the translations of Western philosophy in the “reading fever” of the 1980s, the advertisements and contracts in the market of the 1990s, characters have always been subjected to the dictatorship of meaning. Words, people, and objects, have all been utilized in different ways against their will. To be free, one must first escape from this body form.

11
Shen Xin's email, 1 December
2022.

In Shen Xin's work, *Four Tracks*, four groups of Chinese railroad workers from different time and spaces encountered each other. They started to talk as people in each team died or disappeared, not knowing which group brought on the calamity. *Four Tracks* is a three-act play, but divorced from any specific characters or scenes, with no clues to race, skin tone, age, or physical appearance. The audience could only read the sentences on the screen, with each sentence emerging from a solid-colored background. As one clicks on the screen, the background changes color, and the sentence disappears. Sometimes it takes several color changes on the screen and a period of silence before a new sentence appeared. As the color kept changing, the fragmented dialogue went on. The audience could piece together that the Chinese workers here were from Oromia in Ethiopia, Nevada and Utah in US, Kullu and Kashgar in Xinjiang—perhaps they were the Chinese workers now providing economic assistance in Africa, the Chinese immigrants building the Pacific Railroad in the United States in the 1860s, and the construction corps and local Muslim workers “building the railroad to Xinjiang” in 1974.¹¹ This inexplicable space changes its appearance as people gather, and the people who have fallen into this dreamy land kept distinguishing between “you” and “we”. The Chinese lines are simple, awkward, sometimes with misspelled words, reminiscent of the various tones of Chinese:

“The Pan-Asia Railway is a another legacy of our time.

...

But you're so greedy, staring into others' lands and claiming
them with no shame or guilt.

...

We started out on an equal footing with the white settlers.

...

Failure is one way to describe it.

We should keep searching.

...”

The dialogue was incoherent, perhaps swallowed up by the wind. Shen Xin cut the theater down to scattered utterances, and cut each character down to a patch of color. After tone, accent and pause were abstracted altogether, the violence and limitations of language, as well as human beings' great reliance on it was exposed, as well as the pitfalls that come with it. Shen Xin was not entangled with any single term or identity, instead they exposed misunderstanding and understanding in the form of “dialogue”. In this misty landscape, different identities and languages gradually contaminate each other, like blocks of color that become interwoven patches of light in the midst of change.

This spring, I squeezed my body through a narrow gap in the fence of my compound, and escaped from Shanghai. By June, Guangzhou was already scorching hot, but my landlord, who took care of my lover and I, strongly insisted that we should go with her to Xiaogang Park. A group of young people were practicing there under a huge banyan tree. Among the sweat-shirts, yoga outfits and long skirts, there was barely any conversation, nor was it a deliberate silence. They were rotating their necks with their eye closed, letting their arms dangle like fresh noodles. Someone said, “I'll push with you!” And they stood face to face, legs split backward and forward, with forward knees touching each other. Then they stuck their arms together, rotating, trying to make each other lose balance and lift their feet... This was the exercise organized by High Pressure Club. Although they are a club, there is no need of application or referral for anyone to come here to loosen their shoulders, relax their bodies and push hands (a Tai-chi practice). After being pushed out of the circle between me and each new friend and getting pulled back several times, I realized that this was the most relaxed moment I had spent with people within months. One's outfit, body and appearance became insignificant in this situation. With arms touching and eyes closed, the most important thing was to listen to the partner's inner force, where it goes, and where it ends. Following each other in and out, spinning around, our names didn't matter. When we made involuntary utterances, what came out of our mouths were “Huh?” “Oops, I'm falling!” “Ho ho”—language was pulled back to the here and now, and I was losing balance, but also being dragged back by new friends. Our forms were changing together.

In the final scene of *Four Tracks*, the calamity was not yet removed, but Shen Xin hid in there a method of relief that had nothing to do with the whereabouts of the play: in a sincere encounter, you meet each other's pain in the eyes. When the conversation goes astray, and the language stops functioning, you and I still share the same moment. In the final dialogue, people stopped using grand words and started sharing each other's food. As exotic fruits and spices entered the gut, the bellies rounded, and the terrain of the body was quietly changing.

Neither “I” nor my language is fixed, just like my belly and my dreams.

Translated by Qiu Jiangyue