

BY DAY BY NIGHT

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或美术馆可为之若干事
or Some (Special) Things
a Museum Can Do



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By Day, By Night, or Some (Special) Things a Museum Can Do: An Exhibition in two time zones at Rockbund Art Museum

HOU HANRU | CURATOR

The context

I was excited by Rockbund Art Museum's invitation to curate an exhibition as one of its inaugurating events. It is a new museum in Shanghai—today's new center of the global economy—and the highlight of the city's latest spectacular and amazing urban development projects. It is also an old museum, initially constructed in 1874 for the Royal Asiatic Society (RAS), which is one of the oldest museums in China. The Rockbund Art Museum building's various phases of change, evolving from RAS to a contemporary art space, chronicles an incredibly interesting and significant story that reflects the historical trajectory of Shanghai as a colonial concession becoming a Chinese "global city."

The creation of the Rockbund Art Museum indicates a revival, or a renaissance, of an important institution with a turbulent history in an energetic pursuit to embrace a brilliant future. From its earlier days as the RAS building and "Shanghai Museum," to its opening as a public library, and now re-emerging as a contemporary art museum, the establishment has always been a major site of testimony to and memory of the city's eventual composition, from its colonial past to the current process of modernization via communist revolution. This complex and often perplexing history has made Shanghai a world legend, and one of the most dynamic, thrilling, and promising of global cities. While toiling in hard negotiations, in double binds, in a deeply contradictory identity as a cultural and political hybrid, in the meantime Shanghai provokes so many fantasies and dreams. In spite of all of the complications, amongst the population there is always an irreducible optimism and confidence that drives the city forward. This renders the metropolis with a most spectacular urbanscape. And it is a city where life never stops: in the day, Shanghai is an enterprising center of economic and urban activities, accentuated by the uproaring noise of traffic, machines, and commerce. In the night, the streets are then invaded by the most electrifying symphony of all kinds of sounds that mix the night market hubbub with popular

karaoke outcries—between hidden dark corners and dazzling neon lights, the city is turned into a paradise for leisure, culture and pleasure, with a flair of seduction, dream and *fleur-du-mal* style of poesy and adventure...

Shanghai is also a unique site for contemporary art production. The art world there has been an avant-garde in the developments of Chinese modern and contemporary art, while growing intertwiningly with the city's extraordinary history. Artists' projects have long been integral to processes of urban expansion and of opening up towards the rest of the world. Actually, the Shanghai art world could even be considered as the most outstanding representation of the city's development over time. Different from most of the "avant-garde" movements in China that biases towards collective claims and struggles, the artists in Shanghai have formed a tradition that privileges individuality and self-reflection. Independence and singularity are emphasized as the superior way to freedom of imagination and expression. Criticality, however, has never been in lack. It is found in almost all art production. Instead of artists being over-passionate and confrontational, most choose to express their views on both reality and inner-life with distance, transcendence and also with a great degree of humour, irony and playfulness. They are radically urbane. They not only claim for freedom in images and words, but also embody it in their body language and everyday acts...

It is with optimism and self-confidence that artists respond to a strange and quasi-grotesque fusion of consumerism and political control—the symptomatic reality of our globalized world today, incarnated so perfectly by China, and in particular Shanghai—that has become a crucial challenge to Shanghai's art scene. Shanghai welcomes a wave of museum boom and art market growth, as seen in the foundation and maturation of institutions like the Shanghai Biennial, as it provides unique conditions for artistic and cultural production. Artists from the city and the country are

not only encouraged to develop more experimental works, but the entire international art world is also beckoned to this still rapidly flourishing site of research, discussion and production. The opening of Rockbund Art Museum is the latest effort to keep the city illuminated on the global map of artistic production.

The project

In this context, I propose to curate a project entitled, *By Day, By Night, or some (special) things a museum can do*.

Nine artists who are among the most active in both Chinese and international art worlds today are invited to Shanghai to study, research and explore the histories and realities of both the city and of the Rockbund Art Museum. Most of them will spend two to three weeks in a residency (organized by the museum) to produce site-specific projects for the exhibition. During this time, the artists may give lectures, run workshops, and carry out other activities in order to establish exchanges and collaborations with the local art community and the larger public. Likewise, local art organizations will be invited to make specific contributions to the project's events.

The exhibition structure entails two distinct but intertwined components that create an intimate and efficient relationship amongst the artists, the works, the events, the institution, the participants, and the realities of Shanghai's city life. The exhibition, or the event, is to unfold throughout the day-time and into the night, with constant surprises. During the day, a more materialized aspect of artistic and intellectual productions will be exposed in the site, where the public can experience a certain visible set of recollections around the dynamic and spectacular urban development and the material growth of the modernization process. This will appear as a more stable and tangible format of an "exhibition." In the night, all of these abiding and solid forms gradually soften. Objects lose their materiality and dissolve into fluid

and uneasily graspable flux and "ether"... The exhibition will be intruded upon and even replaced by more flexible and interactive occurrences that, on the one hand, reveal things that are usually hidden or ignored by the busy and bright daytime activities, and on the other, invite the public's participation in the most relaxed of ways. This is an invitation to the city and its population to enjoy something remarkably other than what is encountered in both day-to-day life and during ordinary night entertainments. Artists will initiate all kinds of performances—from lectures to concerts—while a film festival is planned to feature selected favorite inspirations of the participating artists. A night school proposed by several local educational organizations will present lectures, workshops, symposiums and other activities, and open itself as a platform for professionals of various disciplines.

Throughout various venues, some of the exhibiting artists will be invited to design specific structures to host the events. Together, the events will tell myriad interpretations of 24-hour urban life—with its assorted and often conflicting aspects—via displays, interactions, and collaborations with Shanghai's public.

Site of production, or, what an exhibition and what a museum can do, in our time

The project intends to function, to some extent, in the same rhythm as the real life of this non-stop city itself. By turning into an articulated space and time of city life, *By Day, By Night, or some (special) things a museum can do* strives to become an integrate and even intimate part of urban society. This is where one can find the genuine relevance and coherence of the museum's undertaking. Ultimately, this helps the newly reborn Rockbund Art Museum define its mission and its functions in the early stage of an ambitious plan through which the art space can eventually become an original institution for contemporary art and culture in Shanghai. This uniqueness, at first, can be discovered in the expansion of both the exhibition and the museum as being

primarily recognized by their conventional devices of collection, representation and dissemination of existing art works, to a site of conception, production and new presentation of the works that offer opportunities for public participation and dialogue between the art world and society.

By Day, By Night, or some (special) things a museum can do has been put forth as an articulation of this fundamentally crucial shift of the nature of the museum. The exhibition involves artists from both the local community and the international scene to work site-specifically and produce new projects for the space as a proposal to highlight the museum's momentum in relation to that of its surroundings. Almost all of the artists invited to the exhibition will have spent a considerable period of time residing in and researching the city as the impetus for realizing their projects. Through conversations with the curator, the museum team and the local community, the artists have come up with highly diverse and profound ideas and actions that will take over the physical site with their personal and singular languages and forms.

As a key element in the Rockbund Development—a major urban renovation project in Shanghai, The Rockbund Art Museum itself is an excellent site to explore the makings of urban space and of tendencies pointing towards its future, potentially an even more adventurous and fascinating ongoing project than so many others currently happening in Shanghai. After years of tabula-rasa-ish models of urbanization, the professional circle of urbanism and politico-economic authorities are increasingly embracing new consciousnesses and strategies that combine preservation, renovation and innovative creation. More importantly, in the tension between gentrification of local areas brought on by the power of the capital, and the resistances carried out by the local population, across the Bund there is an arousal of a new urban culture generated in this process of negotiation with “radical” modernization projects and “nostalgic” historic concerns. A kind of self-confidence of the city and of its

inhabitants is more and more visible. The most evident proof is certainly inscribed in the making of new urban projects, from buildings to streets, from public squares to private interiors.

Naturally, the extraordinary Art Deco building of the Rockbund Art Museum (built in 1932-1933) and its neighbourhood under renovation become perfect playgrounds for the artists to explore and creatively elucidate their visions of the city's potentials and energies. The artists are encouraged to take over the architectural context conceptually and physically. Pedro Cabrita Reis (based in Lisbon, Portugal), in a highly economic, precise and fluid manner, has come up with a project entitled, *In There, Out There*. He is widely known for his magician-like capacity to turn ordinary and “poor” materials or spaces into beautiful and transcendental expressions. By simply retracing the floor plan of the National Industrial Bank Building's entrance hall (located right next to the Museum) and turning it slightly around, and then illuminating it with cheap florescent tubes to form a light labyrinth, he transforms this vulgarly decorated marble hall—a clamour of monetary power—into a sublimely poetic and even spiritual powerhouse of light that radiates the force of beauty from within the building to the outside. A “twin” of the installation is also reproduced and mounted vertically to the outside wall of the Museum. It functions as both a reminder of the hidden secret inside the building and a self-evident manifesto of light and spirit for the whole area. Together, 24 hours a day, they create new aesthetic surprise and pleasure for those who have to endure the busy, noisy, and exhausting construction work in the neighbourhood. Cabrita Reis' work renders our perception of our environment as at once more lucid and mysterious: during the day, the light is hardly perceptible; and during the night, it is the only thing visible while the building retreats to darkness. It's like a typhoon eye with pure fresh air in the midst of swirling pollution... This is certainly the Truth that the artist claims to manifest in his art—something that is so perfect that it goes beyond

the distinction between the “known” and “unknown.” It is so perfect that one can only “see with one’s eye closed,” as the artist declares...¹

The Seoul based artist/designer Choi Jeong-Hwa also intervenes directly in the Museum building and surrounding spaces. Nurtured by the exciting street scenes of Asian cities, in which plastic products are the dominant materials and signs of the everyday life, he invents his own “Arte Povera” by utilizing the most popular and economic of plastic products (such as baskets, stools, beads, curtains) to create his installations. These installations, instead of being seen as autonomous art works, function as a kind of total environment—something mingling architecture, furniture, art work, etc. After discussions with the curator and the museum team, as well as with some other artists, Choi proposed designs for several spaces in and out the Museum building: during the day there is a projection/conference hall to accommodate artist Sam Samore’s video installation, and during the night, a film festival, a night school and other performances/conferences are planned. A huge chandelier made of plastic beads hangs from the light well situated on the museum’s sixth floor. Several installations with plastic products in flora forms are installed at various points outside of the museum and its surroundings...

Tu Weicheng, from Taiwan, has developed his work into a system of fictional archaeology that defies the notion of “historic truth” and its ideological, political, and museological effects. His work always originates from the location and invention of excavation sites in urban space and ends with a presentation in museum galleries. For our project, he decides to expand this approach through an active and performative intervention process that intends to reveal city dwellers’ interpretations of Shanghai as a foundational perspective of a new history depicted by his “Image, Sound, Museum” Project.² Tu invited many local people to use their bodies to perform measurements of the built environment,

turning human bodies into the basis of an entirely novel method of imagining and constructing a more humane city. Tu then sets up his “Image, Sound, Museum” with photographs of his performers measuring the environment in the form of film stills along with a collection of cameras from different periods, conveying his fascination with the mythic history of Shanghai’s film industry as having been a witness to the city’s evolution for decades. The work further enforces Tu’s challenge of the reliability of archaeology. This challenge has been a central commitment of his artistic endeavour.

Tu Weicheng’s inquiry into the connection between the city’s history and now, which then leads towards an alternative interpretation of that history is a gesture (both a political act and an artistic metaphor) that appears to be particularly pertinent in our age. His work is presented during a contradictory period in which most of us tend to embrace the euphoric and occasionally hysteric present dominated by the power of the media and digital technology, while in the meantime, we develop a kind of amnesia vis-à-vis history and memory. The historic sites of the Museum, and also around the area of the Rockbund development, intensively embody such a paradox and therefore become ideal locations to examine it. This opportunity allows both the artist and the public to participate in a topic very important to our time, and it is through Tu Weicheng’s interactive working process that he addresses these inquiries exemplarily.

Indeed, the question of history and truth is increasingly evoked in China’s art communities, as they too are vulnerable to the contagion of historic amnesia in the age of globalization, and as intellectual debates on this question often remain either a taboo or instrumented by political and eco-

1. Peter Pakesch, “‘... with my eye closed’ Conversation with Pedro Cabrita Reis,” in *Pedro Cabrita Reis, True Gardens*, Kunsthaus Graz (Köln: Walther König, 2008), 80-87.

2. See Tu Weicheng’s statement on his project.

conomic propaganda. The art world, which faces the mirage of success in terms of fame and money in the marketplace, is to a great extent trapped in the malady. However, resistance to such a tendency is underway. This is seen in the works of artists that revisit history by proposing independent readings and narratives, and often involve the introduction of multimedia technology that provides them the best means to tackle this immense task. For instance, several young artists have emerged to the forefront of the art scene in the last few years who currently explore the special effects and cultural implications of a new language by combining traditional ink painting, drawing, animation and cinematographic forms. Sun Xun is doubtlessly amongst the most remarkable ones in this group. In his drawing/ink painting-based animation films and installations, he invents new narratives of the past that directly or indirectly refer to modern Chinese history. He invites the audience to reconstruct them based on various hypotheses that may completely change the trajectory of the official version of the history. The rich, subtle and seductively structured language of the films, along with the installation's large drawings and ink paintings, transport the audience far beyond the realm of day-to-day political struggle. In Sun's work, a magician always appears as the protagonist that brings us into a space for profound reflections and inquiry around ontological question of historicity. In *By Day, By Night*, the artist exhibits a new version of his recent work, *Beyond Isms* (2009 --). In this work, Sun doubts the reliability of historic legends—space, time, history, truth, and so forth—by confronting the domination of ideologies (isms). The artist adapts work to the architectural space of the museum and develops it into a new system of narrative that remains in progress... The original work now obtains a new and continuously revived life...

As abovementioned, this strategy of spatial intervention and dialogue with the architectural elements is central to the curatorial philosophy of the whole event. Engaging directly with urban space and life, with specific situations of society,

is the main driving force for all participating artists. Sam Samore articulates this in a particularly sophisticated and relevant manner. For decades, as a *flâneur*—a dweller of global cities such as New York, Paris, Istanbul, Bangkok and Shanghai—he has captured some impressive but deeply intimate images. These images, both still and moving, are of those who live and drift across streets and houses, people who exist somewhere between hardworking and daydreaming. In Samore's innumerable photographs and video/film works, accompanied by fable-like stories, he has developed a panorama. Gathered are beautiful but uncertain expressions of those who enjoy being lost in the city yet who simultaneously strive to escape from unfathomable tension within the alienating urban environment. These figures are melancholic, paradisiacal and ultimately tragic. Sam Samore reveals in the most fantastic and poetic way what is common to their fate. In continuing the work of a film series that the artist realized in other cities, which includes *A Melancholy Encyclopedia* (2007-2008) and *Mirror of Happiness* (2009), Sam Samore has immersed himself into the street crowds of Shanghai for a couple of months to come up with an hour-long "post-narrative" film. Titled, *Hallucinations/Paradise*, the film is "a fable about everyday life, madness, love and Shanghai."³ It recounts half-imagined, half-true stories of three couples of lovers who immigrated from other cities to Shanghai and possess the same names. The man's name is Will, and is an anthropologist, and Lily is the woman, who is a psychologist. Surviving in loneliness and longing for love, the lovers encounter each other but they can hardly share deep sentiments. Samore writes, "Allegorical figures engage in scenarios highlighting the psychological life of the city. Ghosts inhabit their own delusional world." Throughout the film, "a narrator dispenses information, the veracity unsubstantiated."⁴

3. See Sam Samore's artist statement on "*Hallucinations/Paradise*," 2010

4. *Ibid.*

Shanghai is a fascinating city for those interested in exploring the tension between urban transformation and individual psychology. It is this tension, along with Shanghai becoming one of the most talked-about cities today, that has generated an amazingly alluring image, or a site, of imagination, fantasy and desire, both for the global media and also for the art world. In particular, it calls the attention of artists who live and work between different cultures and embrace cultural confrontation, conflict and hybridity in their work. Shahzia Sikander, a Pakistani living in New York, is among the most outstanding artists working in this tendency. In her work that she develops through painting, installation and video, she investigates the metamorphoses of traditional forms into original and effective ways to face, and even to defy, a contemporary world entangled in social and geopolitical conflicts. Her animation films fantastically extend Persian-Pakistani miniature painting and Urdu calligraphy to open up infinite new possibilities of cultural translation and of deconstruction-reconstruction. For *By Day, By Night*, she decided to collaborate with a New York-based experimental musician of Shanghai origin, Du Yun. Together, they feature a multimedia installation. It derives from a live performance of Du Yun (that also includes Wang Changcun, a young experimental musician from China) and Sikander's new animation film that, by means of both appropriation and detour, mixes motives and figures of miniature painting, Urdu and Chinese calligraphies, as well as ancient and modern literatures. It is a total art project that unfolds from the night to the day. The work encompasses multifarious possibilities, producing a kind of space for fantasy and metamorphosis referable to a Samuel Beckett play, Homi K. Bhabha's *Third Space*,⁵ and a Chinese contemporary city that is a melting pot of diverse cultural influences and modes of living. The unprecedented collaboration between both the artist and the musician provides an entirely new experience where the audience is able to navigate through this dreamland-like installation. It also opens up an exciting and contemplative space in which the public can share and enjoy the artist's

investigation: how to invent "the interstitial space," between movement and break, between sound and silence, between continuation and transgression, between reality and ideal...⁶

During the preparation of the project, Shahzia Sikander stayed in New York City while Du Yun made trips between New York and her hometown to investigate recent changes in Shanghai and of the site itself. A cross-continental conversation built up as a central element of the conception of the project. This semi-spiritual and semi-physical travel has extended the exhibition and the museum as a site of production to an exceptionally far-reaching and yet still relevant one.

In the meantime, from the other side of the world in Eastern Europe, Nedko Solakov also carried out a long march-style travel as the core of his project. Despite his reputation as a globally active artist, unlike most of his colleagues, Solakov refuses to travel by plane. So to come to Shanghai from his hometown, Sofia, Bulgaria, is a real challenge. After discussions with the curator and the museum team, Solakov decided to travel by the famous Trans-Siberian Train. It takes at least ten days to journey across many borders. The trajectory then becomes the site of his residency and studio. The artist, continuing his humorous but pungently critical way of reading, interpreting and transforming readymade objects and situations, comes up with a totally open and constantly shifting project to record all kinds of events, whether planned or incidental, that he encounters on the trip. Accompanying him on the trip will be his wife and a big golden ceramic toad, a gift from New York's China Town. This is perhaps the most direct link with China that the artist can find in his collection of things. It will be the starting point of a long dialogue with the Chinese context and the audience, one that is promised to be successful: Nedko Solakov's

5. Shahzia Sikander in conversation with Fereshteh Daftari, in *Shahzia Sikander* (DAAD/Ikon Gallery), 58

6. *Ibid.*

work, comparable to Milan Kundera's novels, conveys stories, sentiments and ironies of a generation of thinkers who have lived through the doubly alienating experience of post-communist and neoliberal capitalist transitions. The uncanny but witty self-mockery and subtle but powerful critique of the dilemma of human existence in this specific condition can certainly find deep echoes among the Chinese today...

Sikander/Du and Solakov's work indicate this new horizon of life vision—now a transnational and transcultural consciousness on behalf of those who work to negotiate spaces for creativity in the globalized urban space. As pointed out throughout this text, Shanghai's art community strongly represents such a trend. Zhou Tiehai, a leading figure of the art scene in the city, has for a long time based his work on issues around the impacts of Western economic and institutional powers on everyday life in China. Since Shanghai is a post-colonial city that finds itself at the forefront of China's integration in the global economic system, it is the most sensitive location to examine such a power relationship. Zhou appropriates images of mass media and commercial advertisements to transform them into comic and even absurd figures related to the art world and its celebrities. With a sense of black humour, he always includes himself in the circle, revealing the profound cynicism that drives the booming of the art market and the intellectual decadence of the system of cultural production and consumption. Zhou has developed his own quasi-industrial production system to emphasize the similarity between art and commodity. Ultimately, his work reveals the very origin of the "sin": the hegemony of Western discourses and its ideological machine, in forms of literature, the academy, institutions, imagery, and so forth. These influences determine and control life and value standards (including aesthetic criteria) of the "world system." Zhou Tiehai's work co-opts and resists this power machine, and despite the risk of becoming as equally cynical as many others, penetrates into the system and attempts to deconstruct it from within. His latest endeavour is new works from the

considerably extensive series of paintings started in 2008, entitled *Desserts*. The paintings "illustrate" and joke about a delirious French text written by a friend on gastronomy—a supposed ultimate symbol of Frenchness and "good taste"—commenting on the "authoritative Power of the academic intelligentsia of the Verb."⁷ The text is incredibly long and tongue-twisting, divided into different sections such as "La Caroleuse," "Le Ministre," typically *à la française*. Zhou Tiehai further complicates the narrative by inserting small paintings derived from media images: fashionable, seducing and even erotic. They are installed in the café of the Rockbund Art Museum, the best place to display desserts. A series of sound tracks recording the texts are also installed in the café and in the elevator, along with the texts themselves and the paintings, to form another total environment. The work is a playful and mocking demonstration of the notorious cliché of the French "good taste," which has been so much pursued by the nouveaux riches across the world today.

Zhou Tiehai's satiric entanglement with the question of "good taste" as a key element of the influences of globalization on our everyday life is also shared by Choi Jeong-Hwa, who enjoys the common experience as a witness to urban booms in Asia. Choi's work, situated between visual art and design, deals directly with the production of commodity and architecture. His use of cheap readymade plastic products to build furniture and architectural structures, in surprisingly novel forms and colours, insert folklore-like, and somehow odd aesthetics into the elitist institutions. But what is even more significant is that he also systematically resorts to knock-offs of global brands, such as Louis Vuitton, to produce his designs. For many people living in Asian cities, piracy, or "illegal copy," of world famous brand products is a normal mode of economy, and, above all, is

7. See Margo Renisio's artist statement on Zhou Tiehai, "Deserts: Art and Greediness," concerning Tiehai's exhibition at MOCA Shanghai.

a way to approach the unreachable dream of luxury, a new desire prompted by the coming of the consumer society. It is also a form of resistance to global capital's monopoly that increasingly redefines and controls social value systems and relationships between people. Choi Jeong-Hwa, as well as Zhou Tiehai, who also has been mockingly appropriating Louis Vuitton, is indeed revealing the very contradictory implications of piracy as a realization of the powerless communities excluded by the mainstream economy, and also as a form of social revolt. In addition, the artists, with their personal insights, like most of the population that can only afford to produce and consume illegal copies, demonstrate an ultimate optimism, joy and inventiveness providing a glimpse into a promising society that balances popular creativity and social solidarity, from which the art world has a lot to learn...

Production of a new urban multitude of singularities.

By Day, By Night is not a conventional thematic exhibition. Instead, it is an open-ended crystallization of the individual artists' research and their engagements with culture in Shanghai. The artists create new visions that testify to the transformation of the city's life, and specifically, to the emergence of the new Rockbund Art Museum project as an influential element in Shanghai's cultural scene. The "exhibition" is evolving into a dynamic and complex system of production and communication that goes beyond conventional curatorial models. There is a clear articulation on singularities—the singularities of individual artists with radically different and diverse personal life experiences and artistic approaches, as well as singularities of specific projects conceived and realized for the sites. Using all kinds of possible languages in and beyond the visual arts, each artist constructs his or her relationship with the context. This new relationship, while leading to a new opening towards more experimental and original development in his or her work, more notably becomes a new phase in the ongoing remaking of his or her

identity. Living in our time, as identity is unprecedentedly open to evolution, change and mutation, the artists' work attests to a reality where everyone is to a certain extent a product of multi-cultural influences and hybridization. These ever-changing individualities contribute to the making of the contemporary social community, a new commons based on the dynamism of the multitude—in which the one is based on respect of difference, diversity and exchange, and solidarity amongst distinct individuals becomes the basis of a new social unity. Innovative ideas and energy are thereby injected into the making process of city's future culture-scape, and generates new public spheres. The experiment of *By Day, By Night*, with continuous evolution in space and time as its central structure, eventually aims to help the museum become a permanent laboratory that returns art to social reality and constantly produces relevance for art's own existence. This is a particularly urgent and critical challenge during a time when Shanghai and other Chinese cities, along with almost all global cities, are going through rapid privatization. Interestingly, the Rockbund Art Museum is a part of an urban development project invested by a private company supported by the municipality and transnational capital, a typical case of urban privatization. In the meantime, its mission and ambition go far beyond this logic to reach the realm of public education and cultural production. It is this tension between the contradictory aspects of the institution, the very in-between-ness of its social status, which can provide the most realistic and efficient model for the upcoming urban commons, or, at least, a possible way to experiment with it. The dialectic relation between singularities and the multitude can provide a remarkable momentum to reconceptualise and to act towards a new culture of democracy and social coherence in which the politics of culture is based on the sharing of the sensible, *le partage du sensible*, a phrase so much cherished by leading thinkers like Jacques Rancière...

Obviously, this is an immense challenge. And there are no

once-and-for-all recipes for it. It is an infinite process of invention, reinvention and mutation, constantly in negotiation with the changing reality. For the inauguration of the Rockbund Art Museum, *By Day, By Night* proposes an adventurous project that, while emphasizing the singularities of the artists to form a dynamic multitude, encourages direct exchange and collaborations with the local community. Artists like Choi Jeong-Hwa, Pedro Cabrita Reis and Tu Weicheng produce works that intervene directly into the neighbourhood. What is even more exceptional and efficient is that we have organized an evening program consisting of various forms of events that directly involves participations of local artistic and cultural circles as well as contributions by the general public. A night school and a film festival take place in the evening, alternately, during the exhibition period. Three important art education organizations in Shanghai (Ray Art Centre – a photography institution, *Xiyi Tang*, a French-Chinese experimental art school and *Art World Magazine* under the leadership of Gong Yan) curate numerous talks, performances and panels with national and international participants. The museum also organizes a series of events. In the evening, the exhibition spaces become the most passionate platform of cultural debates in the city. The film festival consists of films selected by the participating artists of the exhibition. Each of them is also invited to provide a list of three films that have major impacts on their thoughts and work. The twenty-seven selected films, richly picturing an intimate relationship among the culture of moving image, the modern city life, the visual arts and the singularity of each artist, will form the film festival. This evening program is equally important as the day exhibition: as it takes over the physical site of the exhibition come sundown, it provides a new and somehow unknown dimension to the project that helps us to “eclipse” from the material burden of the day culture and enter into a totally different realm—a world of intimacy, spirituality and dream...

One can never fully understand the real nature of a city like

Shanghai without living its nightlife. It is not only the craziness of the material development of the buildings that can define what the city is. On the contrary, it is really by drifting through the unknown zones—between the neon signs and dark lanes (*Linong*) under the shadows of the skyscrapers—that one can really grasp the flair of life here. *By Day, By Night*, as a part of the Rockbund Art Museum's ambitious new program, builds a unique place for the public to live the nightlife maybe more interestingly than before, and in a most creative and passionate fashion. It is through this intrusion into the night, into the obscurity, that one can become truly a contemporary of one's time. As Giorgio Agamben says,

The contemporary is he who firmly holds his gaze on his own time so as to perceive not its light, but rather its darkness. All eras, for those who experience contemporariness, are obscure. The contemporary is precisely the person who knows how to see this obscurity, who is able to write by dipping his pen in the obscurity of the present... the contemporary is the person who perceives the darkness of his time as something that concerns him, as something that never ceases to engage him. Darkness is something that—more than any light—turns directly and singularly toward him. The contemporary is the one whose eyes are struck by the beam of darkness that comes from his own time.⁸

To make us really contemporary to our time—this is what *By Day, By Night* endeavours to do. And it is the most important among “some (special) things a museum can do” in our time.

Paris, August 23, 2010

8 Giorgio Agamben, “What Is The Contemporary?” in *What Is An Apparatus? And Other Essays*, translated by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 44-45.



艺术家自述

沙兹亚·西茨达

Artist Statement

Shahzia Sikander

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这部动画的名称是《最后的哨岗》，整部合作作品的名称是《游翼》。

《最后的哨岗》这部动画的灵感来自于我对次大陆的殖民历史和与上海有关的鸦片贸易的持续的兴趣。主角是一个东印度公司的男人，他在作品中以不同的面貌出现。其中一个爆炸的男人，暗喻盎格鲁-撒克逊人对中国霸权的结束。另外一处则提示了英国人为解决贸易不平衡所进行的邪恶活动，将其表达为一种回荡在空洞的莫卧儿帝国的房间的潜在威胁。

在这部动画中，我也细微地运用了“公司画风”（Company School），一种在19世纪的印度，受英国人推崇的一种视觉语言风格。

The title of the animation is *The Last Post*; the over all title of the collaboration is *Gossamer*.

The animation titled '*The Last Post*' was inspired by my on-going interest in the colonial history of the sub-continent and the events of opium trade with respect to Shanghai. The protagonist is the East India Company man who appears in the piece in various guises. In one instance, the exploding man is a metaphor for the departure of the Anglo-Saxon hegemony over China. In another instance the nefarious activity of the English to combat trade imbalance is hinted upon as a lurking threat echoed in the hollowed imperial Mughal rooms.

In the animation, I have also used subtle references to the 'Company School', a style of visual language patronized by the English in nineteenth century India.

周而复始 [节选]

霍米·巴巴

改变“图像”的尺度不仅可以利用扩大尺寸赋予其全新的视觉存在感。尺度的变化更能彻底改变图像所承载的意蕴，创造一种不确定性——伴随着一种被扩大的多元感——在诠释的过程中打乱了作品原本的意图与形式的惯例。创立了美学传统种类的或作为艺术家创作风格标志的“形式的词汇”（引用沙兹亚·西茨达的说法）突然间失去了对其表达形式的权威：“放大（或缩小）后的图像，”西茨达问道，“是否更显冲突性？更引人注目？更具绘画性？更精准？更有风格？或少些异国情调？”随着尺度的变化，产生了更深层次的有关结构与诠释的观念性悖论，由此释放出美学与意识形态上的不确定性，而这正是尺度问题的核心所在。尺寸，或空间体积会影响视觉感受，但“其本身”与尺度在观念上的挑战并无多大关联。“细密画的空间具有巨大观念力量……”¹西茨达如是说道，而且这看似自相矛盾的论断更坚定了我的观点，即尺度在本质上并不是“大”和“小”的问题。尺度作为一种丈量手段，产生于不同构图要素之间脆弱的平衡，这些构图要素包括具体有形的符号、标志、线条等，或绘画手法上的阴影、笔画、色彩、亮度等。

作为一种相对关系的衡量手段，尺度并不能被等同于作品的垂直结构或色域等特征，因为尺度存在于空隙与连接结构之中，而正是这样的空隙与连接结构，才能将构图的要素与作品的理念相结合，形成一个“整体”。这个“整体”即不“多”也不“少”，恰好是其各部分的总和。正如一座天平般，一件作品恰到好处的尺度感要通过按其观念前提不断调整其各组成部分间的平衡方能达到。西茨达认为：画面尺度的改变会在作品本体层面引发严重的危机，由此导致作品在形式、功能、感知和价值等方面严重的不可判定性：它是否“更引人注目？更具绘画性？更精确？更有风格？少些异国情调？更易理解？少些阴柔？多些阳刚之气？更精简？更经济？还是更平易近人？”我们不能因为这种不可判定性，就相信存在某种范例式的恰当的形式能作为尺度的“规范”供我们模仿。上面提到的这些不确定的甚至

自相矛盾的问题——“更……？”和“少一些……？”——证明了尺度问题体现的是作品及其被接受度在动态与模仿层面的一场持续的角力。动态代表了在诠释与方位层面上具有流动性特征的形式，能将作品的各部分凝聚为一体，与此同时，动态又在表演、观众的认知过程或阐述的过程中改变了作品的特质与价值。如今，数码复制技术，例如扫描或Photoshop，为动态形式的不断扩大或缩小提供了可能。而模仿则是意义与价值流动性的制衡要素，代表着对固定不变的标准和永存框架的一种怀旧之情。模仿层面的“充分性”取决于传统的延续，广义上意义的一致性，介入的即时性与透明度，乃至形式、功能和内容的相似度。

西茨达艺术的修正精神来自于她独创性地对“动态”与“模仿”之间那种极不稳定的张力的巧妙运用，从而彻底打破了细密画艺术传统的平衡。对于美的诉求令她投身于“以打破平衡为目的”的艺术实践中，因为她自己坦承“对直白式的表现手法无甚兴趣……我觉得一种开放式的，无时间限制的叙述会更具感染力”。²在调整画面尺度的过程中，西茨达始终以有利于动态技巧和表现手法的运用为原则，而非构图要素的重组——“大量的对称和透视，对表面、质地和光影的关注”——通过逐级上升的技术成就实现模拟的稳定性：这显然包括了一系列的步骤，从第一步到第二步，直至最后的第十步，形式、内容、结构和素材由此逐步积累成形。

西茨达在她的绘画、装置或动画作品中改变了传统意义上的细密画的“尺度”，利用调节画面的平衡感，令观者能够“看透”画中的世界，而不是仅仅只是“看一个图像”。³在我看来她的手法总的来说比起传统手法，更具叛逆性。

1. Ian Berry & Jessica Hough,《沙兹亚·西茨达：复仇女神》，展览图录，萨拉托加斯普林斯，纽约：斯基德莫尔大学弗兰西斯杨唐教学博物馆和艺术画廊，2004年，第13页

2. 同上：第14页

3. 同上：第15页

她将自己的画作，无论是手绘的还是以数码方式生成的，置于时间流的繁忙的“交叉路口”，以此将观者的注意力引入一个双重视野中。在那转换的一瞬间，眼睛从“看透画中的世界”状态，又旋即返回到“看一幅图”的状态中。人的注意力从迷失在“开放式的，无时间限制的叙述”中，又被拉回并固定在了模仿层面的图画平面上；正是这种不断重复的体验，不断“迷失又清醒，再迷失，再清醒”的循环将她作品中的动态尺度塑造成为一种随着“观看过程”或“观看体验”而不断变化的光学动态，又同时不断改变着“观看”的体验。正如我前面提到的，动态是出现在构图要素之间空隙的运动，它一方面将作品各要素凝聚在一起，另一方面赋予作品概念上的“平衡”，这就好比在重量与体积的波动与摇摆中，为一座天平调节平衡的过程。一开始，可能很难将西茨达对细密画尺度的修正视为一种双重视野的动态形式——即“迷失与清醒”的循环过程——因为我所描述的这一过程，只能部分地被概括为观看艺术家作品时一种自发的反应。而从另一个角度看，它也是对描述激发其创作灵感的概念性思维的一种尝试；因而，正如维特根斯坦写道，“我们所感知到的任何领域的灵光闪现，似乎一半是视觉体验，而另一半则是思想的灵动。”⁴

我对“动态尺度”的描述旨在探索被西茨达称为“分层”的艺术手法中涉及的时间、动态和视觉表现形式。“分层”构成了她“形式的词汇”的核心，因为它既直接指向艺术家与传统的渊源，又关系到艺术家变革式的艺术手法。对于这样一位耕耘于不同形式的媒体间，探索其作品画面平衡感的艺术家，“分层”无疑是解读其作品在观念层面的尺度的关键要素。

本文节选自霍米·巴巴的文章《周而复始》(*Beginning Again*) 原文发表于沙兹亚的个展画册《沙兹亚·西茨达》(*Shahzia Sikander*)，爱尔兰现代美术馆出版，都柏林，2007年。

4. Anthony Kenny (编辑), 《维特根斯坦读本》(*The Wittgenstein Reader*), 英国牛津大学: 布莱克威尔出版有限公司, 2004年, 第183页

Beginning Again

Homi Bhabha

Changing the scale of an “image” does not merely give it a new visual presence by virtue of its enlarged dimensions. A shift in scale transforms the very discourse of the image and creates a feeling of uncertainty—accompanied by an enlarged sense of plurality—in the act of interpretation that unsettles the framing intentions and formal conventions of the work. The “vocabulary of forms” (to use Sikander’s phrase) that establishes the genres of an aesthetic tradition—or identifies the creative signature of an artist’s style—suddenly loses authority over its representations: Is the scaled “up” (or “down”) image, Sikander asks, “...*more confrontational? More noticeable? More painterly? More precise? More stylized? Less exotic?*” Such aesthetic and ideological uncertainty, unleashed by a change in scale points to a deeper conceptual paradox—both structural and interpretational—that is at the heart of the problem of scale. Size, or spatial volume makes a visual impact, but *in itself*—has little to do with the conceptual challenge of scale. “The space of the miniature painting is big in concept...,”¹ Sikander says, and this seeming paradox lends weight to my contention that scale is not primarily about “big” and “small.” Scale is a measure that emerges out of the precarious balance that exists in the relation between compositional elements, whether the concrete: signs, symbols, line; or painterly: shade, brushstrokes, colour, light.

As a *relational measure*, scale cannot be tied to any feature of a work like “verticality” or the “color field” because it dwells in interstitial spaces and connective textures that articulate compositional elements into the conceptual vision of the work “as a whole.” It is a “whole” that is neither *more* or *less* than the sum of its parts because the work gains its sense of scale—rather like a weighing scale—through a continual adjustment and negotiation of the balance of its component parts in relation to its conceptual project. When you change scale, Sikander suggests, you generate a profound crisis at the ontological level of the work that results in profound undecidability in relation to form, function, perception and

value: “*More noticeable? More painterly? More precise? More stylized? Less exotic? More accessible? Less feminine? More macho? More minimal, more economical, less precious?*” This undecidability should not lead one to believe that there exists some mimetically adequate or appropriate form that constitutes a scalar ‘norm’. What these uncertain and ambivalent questions demonstrate—*more...and...less*—is that the question of scale represents a continual struggle between the kinetic and mimetic aspects of the work and its reception. Kinesis represents forms of interpretational and aspectival mobility that articulate the component parts of a work while changing its quality and value during the process of performance, reception or enunciation. In the present day, digital processes of reproduction such as scanning or Photoshop, present possibilities within which the kinetic is constantly enlarging or shrinking. Mimesis is the counter-weight to this mobility of meaning and value; it is the nostalgia for the stability of norms and frameworks of constant presence. Mimetic “adequacy” is dependent on the continuity of tradition; the broad consensuality of meaning; the immediacy and transparency of mediation; and a relation of semblance between form, function and content.

The revisionary spirit of Sikander’s art arises from her ingenious ability to exploit the precarious tension between kinesis and mimesis which radically imbalances the miniaturist tradition. Her own quest for beauty commits her to an art-practice ‘in the service of destabilization’ because she confesses to being “less interested in direct illustration... I find open-ended, timeless narratives more compelling.”² Sikander tilts the scales in favour of using kinetic techniques and strategies of representation rather than re-tooling compositional elements—“a lot of symmetry, perspective, atten-

1. Ian Berry & Jessica Hough, *Shahzia Sikander: Nemesis*, exhibition catalogue, Saratoga Springs, NY: The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, 2004, p.13

2. *ibid.* p.14

tion to surface, texture, light, etc.”—that impose mimetic stability through an ascending scale of technical achievement: It is clearly a series of steps—step one leads to step two which eventually leads to step ten, allowing the build-up of form, content, structure and materials.

Sikander transforms this conventional “scale” of the miniature-image in her work—paintings, installations, animations—by shifting the *balance* of the picture-plane to allow one to “look... into” a world as opposed to “looking at” an image.”³ In my view her method is altogether more transgressive than that opposition implies. She places her images—whether they are hand-drawn or digitally derived—at the unsettled intersection of a temporal flux that lures the viewer’s gaze into a double-vision. In an alternating flash, that seems to take no time at all, the eye “looks *into*” a world and then returns to “look *at*” the image. The gaze moves from being lost in the “open-ended, timeless narrative” to finding itself framed and fixed upon the flat surface of the mimetic image, and it is this iterative experience of being continually “lost-and-found-and-lost-and-found” that establishes the kinetic scale of her work as a optical movement that changes *in the very process or experience* of looking, while constantly changing the experience of *looking*. As I suggested earlier, kinesis is an interstitial movement that occurs in-between compositional elements, holding the work together while providing it with a conceptual “balance” that resembles the process of adjustment required in balancing a pair of weighing-scales caused by the flux and vacillation of weight and volume. It might be difficult, at first, to see Sikander’s revision of the miniaturist scale as a kinetic form of double-vision—“lost-and-found”—because the process I am describing is only partially a spontaneous response to the experience of looking at her work. It is also, in part, an attempt to describe the conceptual idea that informs her practice, and hence, as Wittgenstein writes, “the flashing of an aspect on us seems half visual experience, half thought.”⁴

My description of “kinetic scale” is an attempt to explore the processes of time, movement, and visual representation involved in a technique that Sikander has often referred to as “layering.” Layering is central to her “vocabulary of forms” because it refers, at once, to her link with Tradition while relating to her transformative technique. Layering also provides a key to the conceptual scale of her work as she negotiates the balance of her images within a wide and disparate variety of media.

Excerpt from Homi Bhabha’s essay, “Beginning Again” in *Sharzia Sikander: Irish Museum of Modern Art* (Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2007).

3. *ibid.* p.15

4. Anthony Kenny (ed.), *The Wittgenstein Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004, p.183

艺术家自述

杜韵

关于这个作品的触觉：

物质与精神在2010年中，渲染为一件有形及又可触之物。它们越加不可分割，作为艺术家，没有必要去探讨哪点与哪点的对应。

我上轨听着评弹，下轨翻至电子音乐。不用把评弹当现代化，不用评弹新听，或电子乐加添传统元素；多轨同存，这已是我们的生存模式。

近十年，老房新概念，传统模式先锋样板。加上人的躁动，上海是一个初看是城，再观非是的池沼。管你是谁，心跳脸潮地先动起来。也许我所述说的正好是你的故事；也许我的物语不是你的视角。但咱们图的，也正是百家争鸣的好精神。或许到最后，沉淀的又是一个时代的冥想。

关于我的音乐：

受正统科班和作为一名表演艺术家的丰富阅历的双重影响，我的音乐模糊了阐释艺术、原创艺术与即兴创作艺术间的界限。

想象中的声音实践于现实中的过程好比揭开一层面纱，去展现特性、记忆与认同感。我喜欢想象自己是在一个鱼缸中创作我的作品；能否让听众畅游并居住在这个空间中——在这里，音乐构思不是矫揉造作的符号，而是发自内心的共同情感。在一种挑战被流派束缚的渴望驱使下，我的音乐由纯粹的灵性沉淀，继而唤起一种触手可及的质感。它试图表达的，是自由意志与绝对宿命论之间那种固有的矛盾与张力。

Artist Statement

Du Yun

Some words on my thoughts for this project:

In 2010, materialism and spirituality have morphed and coalesced into an inseparable matter, simultaneously both formative and tangible. As an artist, I feel little necessity to pinpoint what triggered what.

In the era of iPod shuffle, I'd listen to a traditional song followed by an electronica track. Don't ask me to contemporize the traditional; don't tell me to sprinkle traditional flavor onto the electronica. Diversity is our living mode; multitasking our mind is the way to tackle our multi-faceted life.

Within the last decade, old architecture has quoted new concepts, and traditional mode avant-garde concepts have filled this town—Shanghai is a city that is not a city in your mind. Whoever you are, when immersed in this locale, don't you feel the pulse to live in the art of life as lived in transition? Perhaps my story resonates with yours. Maybe my telling is not your perspective. And yet, what we are attempting to communicate is at once chaotic and logical, boggling and inspirational. What if, in the end, this process would filter down as the very staple of our time.

Some words on my music:

My work, informed by both academic training and myriad experiences as a performing artist, blurs the boundaries between interpretive, originative, and improvisational disciplines.

Transmitting imagined sound into air resembles removing a mask to unveil identity, memory, and recognition. I like to think of creating a work within a metaphorical fish tank; I invite the listener to swim and to live within this space where musical ideas become shared visceral emotions, not artificial trademarks. Propelled by the desire to defy expectation and genre, my music is distilled from a stripped-down spirituality, often evoking a sense of corporeality. It explores the inherent tension between free will and absolute fatalism.

本画册值上海外滩美术馆《日以继夜，或美术馆可为之若干事》展览之际出版

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By Day By Night, or some (special) things a museum can do at Rockbund Art Museum.

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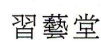
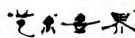
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