

# 「橫看成嶺側成峰」的

在各國城市多次駐村和展覽，新秀藝術家鄭亭亭體驗了語言隔閡的各種情境，卻以這些情境啟動不同的連結模式，讓語言不通成為可親近的陌生感，在他者和自我之間隱約連出可互通的、可跨越和可雙向運用的符號想像。

## 圖像與觀念的競合

拼幅的《非志願性讀者》（Involuntary Reader, 2011），鄭亭亭作品讓人聯想到在一九六〇至八〇年代的觀念藝術，觀念藝術家尋求的是形式主義的捨棄，許多作品以文字為內容，形式幽微彷彿作品就是說明牌。《非志願性讀者》的低調內容和裱框，讓人想起德國觀念藝術家漢娜·姐柏文（Hanne Darboven, 1941-2009）貼滿展覽牆面的「壁紙式」作品。漢娜·姐柏文的作品將時代數字化，像是數年間的計時記錄或是重要事件的數字紀錄，或是世界金融的運算等，用以表現因為數字化而失去了輕重的現實世界、以及失去當下立足點的創作者立場。漢娜·姐柏文讓時間成為藝術創作的時代性問題的答案，而鄭亭亭隨手取得的報紙之照片，讓物件對象成為藝術時代性的答案。

《非志願性讀者》的內容是藝術家在語言和種族大熔爐的大城市中，隨手獲得的報紙。在倫敦或任何一個大都會，各種語言、區域範圍、移民社群或黨派立場紛雜多樣，而閱讀過的報紙也俯拾皆是，它們或者成為隨機的行銷、或者只是擦身而過的陌生言語。鄭亭亭從報紙的側面拍照，讓報紙獲得了圖像，確缺乏訊息，多語言的矛盾性成了道地的「不言而喻」。以近似低限藝術（Minimalism）的手法，在影像可複製和靈光消逝的時代，鄭亭亭以攝影「聖像化」了一疊疊的報紙，並運用了展覽機制的「冊封」功能，報紙的照片呈現了新聞的即時性和隨即失去時效的物質性，突顯了訊息與圖像之間的矛盾，也並置了藝術史裡恆久不相容的物質性與神聖性。

## 知識剖面

用報紙的圖像記錄，藝術家質問了藝術議題裡的「當代性」問題，和觀念藝術（Conceptual Art）形成了有趣的對照。觀念藝術出自對形式（Formalism）的反動，也自我推翻了「為藝術而藝術」（l'art pour l'art）的特權，並取消了圖像在藝術裡的優先地位。鄭亭亭「言之有物」的作品，讓她的觀念藝術既有原始參照事件、也有創作者的痕跡；既有圖像優先地位、也保留了符號系統的可交換性。

《我以貌取人》（I judge a book by its cover, 2011）以視覺方式呈現了語言的屏障，以及知識之不可觸及。鄭亭亭不是表達語言文字隔閡造成的不安，而是創造出與陌生相遇的模式。藝術家從圖書管理找出各種語言的書，將它們堆疊起來並從書頭一側拍攝下來。每一疊書都有標題如〈俄文書〉（Russian Books）、〈西文書〉（Spanish Books）等，然而照片並沒有透露這一疊疊的書的任何文字性資訊，沒有觀眾能證實這些書的確是該語言的書。藝術家明知道沒有資訊的圖像和說明性的標題是有縫隙的，而這正好是葛林柏格（Clement Greenberg）的「後圖像學」和「觀念藝術」之間張裂的空間，創作者在此轉圜，可以是圖像學與符號學的重建、也可以是知識論（epistemology）的取徑。《我以貌取人》一方面呈現了知識與證據之不可辨認，另一方面以圖像呈現了集體擁



有的在接觸知識時，大家都有過的肌理與觸摸記憶，甚至因為荒廢時日，而使書本在無端的曝曬下捲曲、變舊和脆裂的熟悉感。鄭亭亭的創作跨越在圖像學與知識論之間，撥弄了巴別塔（Babel Tower）寓言的沉重，展現了輕薄靈巧的「橫切面藝術史」。

## 縫隙中的寓言

鄭亭亭的創作將語言、圖像、符號、敘事相串，從矛盾和縫隙中創造寓言，她提供的視覺策略正如蘇軾的詩句：「橫看成嶺側成峰，遠近高低各不同。不識廬山真面目，只緣身在此山中」，多重的揣摩與聯想，才是境界之所至。藝術家的《有水果的靜物》（Still Life with Fruits, 2009-2011）系列在近似十七世紀靜物畫式的構圖中，放入企業商標或政治、國家符號，聯繫出一條隱約微弱的藝術史虛線。十七世紀的風俗靜物畫，是為當時的中產階級的藝術收藏應運而生的，以隨機排列的器皿和散落或撥開的水果為構圖，靜物畫反映了當時新富階級的物質眷戀和消費力，但藝術家也同時以水果象徵繁華短暫，以便讓藝術收藏成為融合生活欲望和生命品德的行為。而鄭亭亭則以《物件奇想》系列告知商標已全面接收了藝術之象徵手法，商標不需被隱喻、不需被解碼也不需被美學化，名牌商標本身早已成為感官文化中的主題和主體了。

在《配音計劃》（Dubbing Project, 2012）中，藝術家讓出創作者的話語權。鄭亭亭從台灣的电影片中節錄一段幾乎沒有起伏的劇情片段，由聽不懂中文的外國人任意聯想，再為想像出來的劇情配音，而讓每一小段影片獲得了四段不同的對白和故事。每一小段影片都是提供劇情者的文化記憶、社會關係和禮俗應對經驗以及想像力的展現，在短短數分鐘的電影情節中平坦並列。電影的翻譯配音和「語言不通」常常是電影藝術性的無解題，在鄭亭亭的安排下卻成了自由賦意的共同創作，也因此讓不同文化背景的生命記程，可以在隨機的片段中彼此延展和穿插。

## 玄同之徑

鄭亭亭以藝術釋放主體性，作品因而也具有棄智的特質，她的作品常常像謎題，但創作者與猜謎者一樣無言無知，猶如老子之「知者不言，言者不知。塞其兌，閉其門。挫其銳，解其紛，和其光，同其塵，是謂玄同」。過度的資訊和圖像反而顯得駁雜干擾，過多的符號玄機反而築起了溝通屏障。相對地，觀眾被置放在「少了一點」的訊息處境中，卻開啟了想像力的一端。在鄭亭亭的腳本中，無論是藝術史或是故事、謎題、電影橋段、文化印記，甚至是誤會，都可以找到重新賦意的創造者和觀賞者，語言的複義和多重性，都可能在相遇的片段裡重尋足跡，新獲路徑。



# Sideways a mountain vertically a peak—Co

As a resident artist who has held exhibitions in many cities abroad, the young artist, Ting-Ting Cheng, has experienced all sorts of predicaments caused by language barriers. Yet, these situations led her to initiate a different mode of interaction that transforms language barriers into an approachable kind of foreignness. The artist began to interact with others through an interoperable, unrestricted, and two-way communication based on imaged symbols.

## The Competition Between Image and Concept

Composed entirely of smaller images, Ting-Ting Cheng's *Involuntary Reader* (2011) reminds us of conceptual art between the 60's and 80's. During that period, conceptual artists sought to abandon formalism and text itself often became the artwork. With the least amount of form possible, the works were almost just text panels. The simple content and framing of *Involuntary Reader* is reminiscent of German conceptual artist Hanne Darboven's (1941-2009) "wallpaper-style" work. Darboven indexed eras in her works. Examples are chronological or numeric records of major events, or calculations regarding the world economy. They express a reality lost in numbers as well as the artist's standpoint lost in a moment. Darboven made time an answer to the art creation of an era, while Cheng photographed newspapers to achieve the same.

"*Involuntary Reader* " features newspapers that the artist handily obtained in a metropolis, a melting pot of languages and ethnicities. In London or any other metropolitan city, languages, districts, immigrant communities, and political parties are so diverse, this is reflected in their newspapers. They either become a means for random marketing or an alien language on an easily ignored piece of paper. Cheng photographed newspapers from the side to create images without information. Multilingual yet self-contradictory, each image "tells its own story." In an era where images can be duplicated and inspiration easily fades away, Cheng uses minimalistic techniques to "idolize" stacks of newspapers, and let their "frozen in time" qualities dictate the exhibition. Photos of newspapers presented the immediacy of news and its nature of expiring at the blink of an eye, reinforcing the contradiction between information and images while juxtaposing eternally irreconcilable materiality with the holiness of art history.

## A Slice of Knowledge

With records of newspaper images, the artist addressed the question posed by "contemporaneity" in art, forming an interesting contrast to conceptual art. Conceptual art started as a protest against formalism. It eventually overturned its own privilege of "l'art pour l'art" and discarded the priority of images in art. "Substance in speech" provided Cheng's conceptual art with original references and symbols. Both the priority of an image and the interoperable nature of symbol systems have been retained within the artwork.

*I Judge a Book by Its Cover* (2011) is a visual representation of language barriers and the intangible nature of knowledge. Instead of expressing the anxiety resulting from language barriers, Cheng created a way to confront the unfamiliar. The artist found books in various languages from the library, piled them up and photographed them from the side. Every pile was labeled with a title, such as "Russian Books" or "Spanish Books." Yet, no textual information of the piles is revealed in the photos, and no viewer can actually verify whether the books really are in a certain language. From the onset, the artist recognized the discrepancy between images without information and their textual titles. This refers to the void between Clement Greeberg's "post-painterly abstraction" and "conceptual art." The artist's exploration of this realm could be seen as an act of restoring iconography and semiotics, and accessing epistemology. On one hand, "I Judge a Book by Its Cover" presented the impossibility of recognizing knowledge and evidence. On the other hand, its images presented the collective physical experience when



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accessing knowledge or even the familiar feeling of seeing pages curl age and become crispy. Cheng's creations connect iconography and epistemology, fiddle with the Tower of Babel conundrum, and present a "thin cross-section of art history".

## Discrepancies in Fables

Cheng's works connect language, image, symbol and narration, creating fables filled with contradictions and discrepancies. Her visual approach is perfectly summarized by Su Shi's poem:

*"From the front it looks like a peak, from the side, a ridge  
How different it looks from far or near, from high or low  
You'll never know the true shape of Lushan  
Whereever you are"*

Repeated meditation and association is a state of mind. In the Still Life with Fruits (2009-2011) series, the artist embedded logos and political symbols in still life compositions similar to paintings of the 17th century to vaguely outline a timeline of art history. Still life paintings of the 17th century were created for the collection of the middle class. Depicting randomly placed utensils and scattered fruits, still life paintings reflected the rising class' obsession with materialism and consumerism. However, artists also used fruits to symbolize the transitory nature of prosperity, making art collection an act of desire and virtue. With the Still Life with Fruits series, Cheng informs the viewers that logos have already taken over symbolism in art. They don't need to be metaphors, nor do they need to be decoded or made into an aesthetic tendency. Logos of famous brands have already become the themes and subjects for our perceptual culture.

In Dubbing Project (2012), the artist abdicated the right of speech. Cheng picked dramatic footage from Taiwanese films, and then showed them to non-Chinese speakers who later dubbed the footages with their own imagined stories. Each piece of footage was matched to four different dialogues and stories to present the storyteller's cultural memories, social relationships, experiences and imaginations. They were displayed in parallel in a compilation of just a few minutes. Translation, dubbing and "language barriers" are hurdles the film industry are unable to resolve. Even so, they were transformed into a co-creation open to interpretation. Different cultural backgrounds and memories are thus allowed to extend and interlace with each other amidst random fragments.

## The Path of the Mysterious Agreement

Cheng releases a sense of subjectivity with art; therefore, her works characteristically discard wisdom. Many of her works are like puzzles. The artist is as speechless and ignorant as the guessing audience, echoing Laozi's statement: "He who knows does not speak; he who speaks does not know. He will blunt his sharp points and unravel the complications of things; he will attempt his brightness and bring himself into agreement with the obscurity. This is called 'the Mysterious Agreement'." Excessive information and images appear to be impure and disturbing; excessive subtitles lead to communication barriers. On the contrary, when viewers are placed in an environment with "a bit less" information, their imagination is unleashed. In Cheng's script, whether it is in art history, stories, riddles, film footage, cultural inscriptions, or even misunderstandings, one can always discover new meanings created by the artist and audience. Multiplicity and the dual meaning of language can always give rise to new meaning within film footage.