

從曾建穎的無聲戲看他的生命世界

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曾建穎初期畫作的形象與道釋繪畫傳統有關，尤其是佛教造像的風格。以工筆勾勒外形輪廓的同時，他運用水墨，對圖像進行暈染，營造類似傳統所說的「凹凸法」的立體視覺效果。他也偏好對比鮮明的設色，凸顯自創的獨特造型。乍看，他彷彿是在創作佛畫，實際只是風格上的諧擬，但無褻瀆宗教或刻意不敬的意圖。挪用定型且類型化的佛像過程中，他將圖像個性化，賦予第一人稱的敘事觀點，摻入自身所在的現實語境。早期的他傾向以兼具輕鬆和諷刺的漫畫趣味，消滅聖像的嚴肅性，形塑如啞謎般的人物表情與情境氛圍。由此也看出，面對藝術史傳統，曾建穎採取的是後現代主義的形式策略。

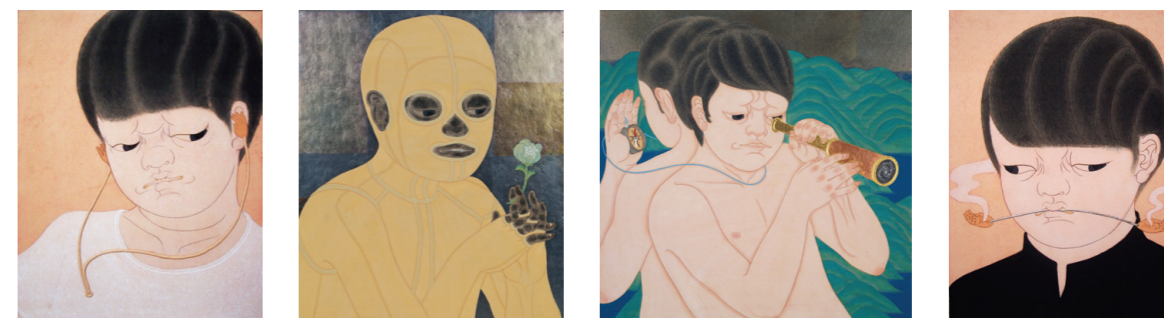
2010 年的《千手計劃——第一個一百》連作系列，是他最早的重要之作。每一畫幅的尺寸略大於 16



千手計畫——第一個一百 / *One Thousand Hands Project - The First One Hundred* (局部 / Details) 2010

開，共由百件組成。根據佛教的手印發想，曾建穎自由挪用並變化，衍生出百種具有生活趣味及表演特質的手勢。搭配手的行為，他置入各式各樣的物象及人形。功能性的小物件，譬如：有色眼鏡、鏡子、掏耳器、美工刀、針筒、繩線、橡皮筋等；也有帶著童趣，卻耐人尋味的玩具；還有一些他憑個人想像建構出來的奇異形體，包括：以動物外形裝扮的人體，以及眼、耳、口、鼻、手、足等五官或身體部位。為了增添視覺的豐富性，他加入浮雕的手段，以顏料厚疊的方式，塑造形象的立體感。

曾建穎畫裡呈現的人形與物象，大抵指涉或影射各種與身體相關的行為。那些混合了動物外觀的人物形體，看似奇形怪狀，實際更像是現實世界當中，刻意奇裝異服，以此張揚、保護、隱藏，甚至武裝自我的人們。曾建穎在近期的一篇自敘當中，有此描述：「身體是能量的流動狀態，是



反省力 / *Reflection* 2012 少女心 / *Petal Divination* 2012 冒險家 / *Explorers* 2012 成年禮 / *Initiation* 2012

意識與物質的介面。」¹ 衣服之於人的關係，可以視為身體的第二層皮膚。人們透過自主的衣著妝扮，反映、表達，甚至宣示自身的認同、主體性、身體觀與審美意識。身體與服裝或扮裝之間的延伸及辯證關係，成為曾建穎核心的創作觀念與形式表達。

到了 2012 年，他筆下的人物轉為更貼近自身狀態的青春形象，更具日常生活的真實感。諧擬的佛手印圖像，變身為等待啟蒙的懵懂少年。帶著靦腆與躊躇眼神的年青身體，沈浸在各自的生命世界。他為一幅幅看起來不大的作品賦予意有所指的名稱——《小心眼》、《反省力》、《少女心》、《冒險家》、《成年禮》等——並為畫中少年配置與畫名相應，或具有弔詭意味的玩物，譬如：泳鏡、耳塞、花朵、指南針、望遠鏡、如意（不求人）等。令人玩味的是，雖然他們都是成長中的少年，卻宛若彌封或滯留在靜止的時空之中，給人如木乃伊畫像 (mummy portraits) 的印象。

曾建穎持續為他畫中那些看似不更事的青春少年擬造成長的情境。經常可以發現，看似美好的場景或時刻，總就潛伏著一股曖昧的違和感。畫中主人翁用他們的身體和表情，傳送無聲的密語。天真且涉世未深的少年或青少年們，忐忑中帶著面對周遭的不適應感，甚至不再無邪。惘然若失的憂鬱神態，洩露他們對現實的失望、挫折或抗拒之情。儘管未必每一畫幅都是曾建穎的親身寫照，但應無疑義地融入了他個人的感知與社會體察。

傳統繪畫主要藉人物以臧否，或是以人物作陪襯，目的在於表彰概念、托寓，以及象徵。曾建穎挪用傳統的一些母題，意圖卻迥然不同。2017 年，他在「顛倒夢想」個展的創作自述中指出：「我想用一種個人的觀點，來切入社會與時代，試圖展現人存在的樣貌。我欲探討的並非社會現象本身，而是現象中『人』的狀態。」² 又說：「我在創作中所呈現的情境，



花氣薰人 / *Air Pollution* 2017

1 曾建穎，〈我用身體讀藝術史〉，曾建穎提供。

2 曾建穎，〈創作自述〉，收錄於《顛倒夢想》(台北：赤粒藝術，2017)，頁 4。



局外人 / *Observer* 2020

反映了自身感覺系統的延伸，是一種透過身體去詮釋感官世界而得出的現象。」³ 脫開人物僅僅作為視覺或語義符號的形式框架，他更自覺地以人為主題，讓身體發言，激活感知，注入真實的呼吸，以此傳情表意。

應該不完全巧合，曾建穎這種以身體表達，藉身體言說的創作思維，與法國哲學家梅洛—龐蒂 (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1908-1961) 的《知覺現象學》論點相應相和。⁴ 特別是，後者在著作裡，談及「生氣」(anger) 這樣的內在情緒，如何通過人的身體，表露為一種姿勢或動作 (gesture)，以及旁觀者如何據以了解。梅洛—龐蒂形容生氣在體內的發作，如同「默劇」(mime) 演出一般。⁵ 實際上，梅洛—龐蒂所指的這種像無聲戲的體感表達，也讓曾建穎同感興趣，嘗試透過具體可見的視覺形式，發展為別具一格的表現。⁶

梅洛—龐蒂指出，「通過我的身體，我才得以了解他人；同樣地，也是通過我的身體，我得以感知『事物』」。⁷ 與此對照，曾建穎的藝術實踐明顯體現了梅洛—龐蒂的獨特思路，甚至成為具體的印證。他將個人體察世界的感知經驗，具象地顯形與轉化，建立了自己的「無聲戲」劇場。面對當代的現實議題，反映個人觀照，以及對他人的注意，曾建穎以情境再造的形式手段，做了乾坤挪移，在畫中重新造景。人物甚至顛覆現實，扮相華麗、誇張，甚至虛幻、超現實，讓觀者感覺正在經歷一場穿越時空的如夢戲劇。

2018 至 2019 這兩年間，曾建穎有機會前往美國紐約、印尼日惹，隻身探訪中國北方，遊歷傳統絲路，親訪洛陽龍門、天水麥積山、敦煌莫高窟、大同雲岡等四大佛教石窟。⁸ 同一期間，世界變局四起。美國內部從性別平權的抗爭一路擴大到種族歧視的暴力對峙。中美兩國霸權的矛盾，惡化至新冷戰的對立緊張。香港的反送中運動演變為官民的血腥對戰。2020 年初以來，以武漢為源頭的新冠病毒，在短短兩個月內擴散並荼毒全球，各國無一倖免。黯淡無明的晦氣籠罩，人類的生活與活動全方位

3 同上註。

4 M. Merleau-Ponty, "The Body as Expression, and Speech," in *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 1962), pp. 174-99. 在與曾建穎談話的過程中，他提到過往在準備與撰寫碩士論文期間，曾經涉獵梅洛—龐蒂對於知覺現象學的一些討論。

5 梅洛—龐蒂的用詞是 "the mime of anger." Ibid., pp. 184-85.

6 曾建穎擬仿默劇身體表演風格的畫作，似乎在《千手計劃——第一個一百》系列中已見端倪；近期的發展更為明顯，譬如：此次「惡托邦」個展中的《局外人》(2020)、《沙洲》(2020)、《願景》(2020) 等。

7 "It is through my body that I understand other people, just as it is through my body that I perceive 'things.'" M. Merleau-Ponty, "The Body as Expression, and Speech," in *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 186.

8 2018 至 2019 這兩年，曾建穎獲得亞洲文化協會 (ACC) 台灣分會的贊助與推薦，得以出國駐村和旅行。

地受到阻礙。負面能量不斷蓄積而擴大，無疑地也寫入了藝術家身體。儘管仍以人為主題，曾建穎筆下不少的日常景觀，已經不再尋常。

「惡托邦」(*Cacatopias*) 作為曾建穎 2020 年個展的名稱，如實反映了他近期諸多作品的景觀。相對於「烏托邦」(utopia) 所寓含的美好，是一個可望不可即，純屬想像或虛擬，並不真實存在的空間，惡托邦更接近傅柯 (Michel Foucault, 1926-1984) 所提的「異質空間」(heterogeneous space) 或「異托邦」(heterotopia)，實際存在於現實世界的某處，而且，根深蒂固在每個文化與每個文明的邊緣角落。⁹ 曾建穎新作中的畫面，大多籠罩在暗黑與陰森之中，讓人感覺魅影幢幢，還瀰漫著詭譎的末日氛圍。¹⁰

啟蒙或成年相關的主題，逐漸從曾建穎的生命世界淡出。¹¹ 年少終也長成，面對的是已知不美好，越來越擾攘，令人焦慮、不安，充滿危機變數的當代現實。以身體作為感知世界的介質，曾建穎對於性別、膚色、身體認同，以及涉及專制父權 (乃至於母權) 的課題，一直敏感而深有體會。¹² 再現為畫面的敘事，他以看似間接的劇場扮裝手法表達，卻不十分保留，直指人性深層地帶的變態之惡。

曾建穎的無聲戲照常上演，劇目也隨他個人的生命閱歷而增長。透過戲中人的眼神、舉手、投足，觀者揣摩他們的情境遭遇，也反芻人心與瞭解世界。



大風吹 / *Foehn* 2020



盈虧 / *Eclipse* 2020

9 Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces (1967), Heterotopias," trans. Jay Miskowicz, <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault_heteroTopia.en.html>.

10 參考《懸念》(2020)、《沙洲》(2020)、《角質身體 XX》(2020)、《角質身體 XY》(2020)、《大風吹》(2020) 等。

11 描繪青春嬉戲的《暮春三月》(2014-2019)，是曾建穎近期少數與啟蒙議題有關的重要代表作。

12 參考《盈虧》(2020)、《蘆葦 / 睡蓮》、《子夜》(2020)、《福星》(2020)、《壽星》(2020)、《情勒》(2020) 等。

Examining the Life-World of Tseng Chien-ying through His Mime Theatre

Chia Chi Jason Wang (Curator)

The form of Tseng Chien-ying's early paintings is related to the tradition of Taoist and Buddhist Figure Painting, especially the traditional style of Buddhist statues. Even as he uses a meticulous and detailed style of realistic brushwork to draw the outline, he also uses ink-wash painting techniques to bleed the image, creating a stereoscopic visual effect similar to what is called "the concave-convex method" in traditional painting. He has a preference for bright, contrasting colors which highlight the unique shape of his own creations. At first glance, it looks as though he is creating Buddhist images, but his work is actually more of a caricature of that style--though it must be noted that the artist is not attempting to be profane or insulting toward religious beliefs here. During the process of appropriating and stylizing these Buddhist images, he personalizes the images, endowing them with a first-person narrative perspective and incorporating his own real context into the piece. In his early period, he tended to use a fun manga style which was light and satirical, reducing the seriousness of these sacred images and shaping a charades-like situational atmosphere filled with riddles. From this it is easy to see that in the face of artistic tradition, Tseng Chien-ying has utilized a postmodern strategy.

2010's *One Thousand Hands Project: The First One Hundred* series is the earliest of his important works. The size of each picture is larger than B5 and made up of 100 items. Working from the mudra gestures of Buddhism, Tseng Chien-ying freely appropriates and adapts from tradition, creating a hundred gestures of his own with an intriguing lifelike yet performative quality. There are small functional objects, for example: tinted glasses, mirrors, ear picks, utility knives, syringes, rope and thread, rubber bands, and so on. There are also a variety of toys imbued with a certain childish amusement that make one stop and think. And there are some bizarre bodies which are the product of his own imagination, including: human bodies dressed in the appearance of animals, as well as various senses and parts of the body such as eyes, ears, mouths, noses, hands, feet, and so on. To increase the visual richness of these scenes, he has given a three-dimensionality to the image by using the technique of relief and an impasto paint style, layering on each layer of paint thickly.

Tseng Chien-ying's painting presents human figures and objects which in the main reference or obliquely hint at all sorts of activities associated with the body. Those human bodies mixed with the appearance of animals appear at first glance to be bizarre shapes. However, they in fact are more akin to people existing in the real world who intentionally wear strange costumes to display, protect, conceal, and even arm themselves. Tseng Chien-ying in a recent artist's note describes it thusly, "The body is a flow state of

power; it is the interface of consciousness and matter."¹ The relationship of clothing to people can be viewed as that of a second layer of skin upon the body. People utilize dressing up as a way to reflect, express, and even boldly declare their self-identity, subjectivity, concept of the body, and aesthetic consciousness. The extension between the body and clothing or costume, as well as their dialectical relationship, thus become Tseng Chien-ying's core creative concept and form.

By 2012, the characters in his artwork had started to get closer to his own youthful state, possessing the realism of everyday life. The caricature of the Buddhist mudra images turned into a muddled youth's expectation of enlightenment. These youthful bodies with shy and hesitant eyes are each immersed in their own life-world. He has given these not particularly large pieces evocative titles such as *Petty Mind*, *Reflection*, *Petal Divination*, *Explorers*, *Initiation*, and so on. Additionally, to create an evocative connection between the youths and the title of each painting, there are sometimes placed within the painting playful objects of a paradoxical nature, such as: goggles, ear plugs, flowers, compasses, telescopes, *ruyi* (backscratchers), and so on. What one immediately finds very interesting is that, although they are youths in the midst of growing up, they appear as marked seals or stuck in the stillness of space-time, giving one the impression of mummy portraits.

Tseng Chien-ying continues to create an environment of maturation for those apparently young and inexperienced youths in his paintings. One usually discovers that in what appears to be beautiful scenes or moments there almost always lurks an ambiguous sense of dissonance. The main characters of these pieces use their bodies and expressions to send a silent riddle. The naïve children and youths, as yet unfamiliar with the world, have a sense of apprehension within which their discomfort toward their surroundings lies; they may never be innocent again. Their depressed aspect, as if filled with a sense of deep loss, reveals their disappointment with the world, their frustrations, their spirit of resistance. Although not necessarily every portrait is Tseng Chien-ying's personal portrait, there is little doubt he has melded his own personal perceptions and social observations into each piece.

Traditional painting mainly uses characters to express a judgement or uses them to set off other elements, the goal then being to commend a concept, allegory, or symbol. Tseng Chien-ying appropriates some traditional motives with an entirely different intention. In the artist statement for his 2017 solo exhibition *The Daydream of Delusions*, he points out "I want to use a personal viewpoint in order to address society and the era and attempt to show the appearance of human existence."² He also states, "The context which shows itself during my creative process reflects the extension of my own sensory systems. This is a phenomenon where I'm using the body to interpret the sensory world."³ Pulling away from the formal framework where characters are nothing more than visual elements or

1 Tseng Chien-ying, "I Use My Body to Read Art History," as provided by Tseng Chien-ying.

2 Tseng Chien-ying, "Artist Statement," in *The Daydream of Delusions: TSENG Chien-ying Solo Exhibition* (Taipei: Red Gold Fine Art, 2017), p. 4.

3 Ibid.

semantic symbols, he intuitively takes people as his main subject, allowing their bodies to speak, to shock perceptions to life, infusing them with real breath, thus expressing emotions true and deep.

It is likely no coincidence that Tseng Chien-ying's use of the body as a form of expression, that his borrowing of the body to express a creative line of thought, is strikingly similar to the viewpoints expounded by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) in his *Phenomenology of Perception*.⁴ Particularly when raising the issue of "anger" and how this inner emotion passes through the human body and exposes itself as a kind of posture or gesture, as well as just how bystanders understand this to be the case. Merleau-Ponty describes the occurrence of anger in the body as something like a mime performance.⁵ In fact, this kind of mime theatre of bodily expression pointed out by Merleau-Ponty also greatly interests Tseng Chien-ying, who has attempted to use concretely visible visual forms in order to develop a unique form of performance.⁶

Merleau-Ponty points out that "It is through my body that I understand other people, just as it is through my body that I perceive 'things.'"⁷ In comparison with this, Tseng Chien-ying's practice of his art is an obvious manifestation of Merleau-Ponty's unique ideas--to the point that it becomes a specific proof of them. He has taken his perceptual experience garnered from his own experience of the world and concretely exposed and transformed it, establishing his very own "mime theatre." Facing the real issues of our current times, Tseng Chien-ying reflects on personal observations of both himself and others, and then reconstructs situations, working from real life objects and events, metamorphizing them into something new and other upon the canvas. Characters even subvert reality; their getup is extravagant, exaggerated, and even fantastic or surreal. The effect is to make the viewer feel as if they are experiencing a dreamlike drama which transcends time and space.

During the years of 2018 and 2019, Tseng Chien-ying had chances to visit New York, Yogyakarta in Indonesia, to go on a solo-trip to northern China, experience the traditional Silk Road, and personally visit the great Buddhist grottoes, such as the Longmen Grottoes at Luoyang, the Maijishan Grottoes at Tianshui, the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang, and the Yungang Grottoes at Datong, etc.⁸ During this period of time, the world was in great turmoil. The fight for gender equality in America eventually expanded into a violent confrontation over the issue of racial prejudice. The conflict between China and America over global hegemony worsened

4 M. Merleau-Ponty, "The Body as Expression, and Speech," in *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 1962), pp. 174-99. Once during conversation with Tseng Chien-ying, he told me that during the preparation and writing of his master's thesis, he had previously worked with Merleau-Ponty's ideas about perception.

5 The exact wording used by Merleau-Ponty is "the mime of anger." Ibid., pp. 184-85.

6 There are already signs of Tseng Chien-ying's imitation of mime performance in paintings from his *The One Thousand Hands Project: The First One Hundred* series; this trend is even more obvious in recent pieces such from the *Cacatopias* exhibition, for instance, *Observer* (2020), *Siltation* (2020), and *Deceit* (2020) and so on.

7 M. Merleau-Ponty, "The Body as Expression, and Speech," in *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 186.

8 During the years 2018 and 2019, Tseng Chien-ying was recommended and funded by the Asian Cultural Council's Taipei Branch in order to travel and reside in far off lands.

into a tense cold war. Hong Kong's fight against extradition to China exploded into a bloody battle between the people and city officials. Starting from the beginning of 2020, the novel corona virus slunk its way out of Wuhan and soon sunk its tendrils into the entire world in only a short two months; no country was spared. Shrouded in bleak misfortune with no sign of the light, all human events and activity abruptly came to a crashing halt. There is a negative energy which is ever increasing, ever expanding, and, without a doubt, this darkness is already written into the bodies of artists. Though taking people as his theme, the ordinary daily life that springs from Tseng Chien-ying's brush is no longer ordinary at all.

Cacatopias is the name of Tseng Chien-ying's 2020 solo exhibit, and it faithfully reflects the landscape of his recent works. In contrast with the glorious beauty promised by a "utopia", which is an unapproachable space which cannot possibly exist, being purely a thing of imagination and invention, the Cacatopia is closer to the idea of a heterogeneous space or a heterotopia as suggested by Michel Foucault (1926-1984). It is something that truly exists certain corners of the real world, moreover, it is deeply rooted in every culture and the marginalized corners of those cultures.⁹ The scenes found within Tseng Chien-ying's new works often take place within forests shrouded in darkness. The flickering phantoms and creepy doomsday atmosphere are eminently palpable to the viewer.¹⁰

Themes of enlightenment or adulthood have gradually faded out of Tseng Chien-ying's life-world.¹¹ In the end, the youth must grow up and face that which he knows to be less than perfect: a contemporary world that is more and more disturbing, anxious, uneasy, and overflowing with the everchanging variables of additional crises. Using the body as a medium to perceive the world, Tseng Chien-ying has always had a deep sensitivity and understanding of gender, race, physical identity, and issues of the authoritarian patriarchy (and even the matriarchy).¹² Represented as narrative scenes, he appears to be indirectly using the theatre and its costuming to express these things. Yet it is not particularly reserved and directly points out the evil that lurks within the depths of human nature.

Tseng Chien-ying's mime theatre continues to be staged as usual, but the playbill is changing as his life experiences continue to broaden and grow. Through the gazing eyes, lifting hands, and kicking feet of the people in this drama, the viewer can begin to realize what they have encountered and mull over the human heart--and understand this world.

9 Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces (1967), Heterotopias," trans. Jay Miskowiec, <<http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>>.

10 For example: *Suspense* (2020), *Siltation* (2020), *Bodysuit XX* (2020), *Bodysuit XY* (2020), *Foehn* (2020), etc.

11 *Teenage Dream* (2014-2019) depicts the playfulness of youth; of Tseng Chien-ying's most important recent works, it is one of the few that tackles themes related to enlightenment.

12 For example: *Eclipse* (2020), *Reed/Water Lily* (2020), *Midnight* (2020), *Pedophile* (2020), *Addict* (2020), *Mommy Issue* (2020), etc.