

Press Release

## wander - circle

Artists: Shi Zheng, Gao Ruyun

Curator: Jiang Jun

Opening: May 26, 2018 15:00 - 19:00

Exhibition Period: May 26 - June 29, 2018

AIKE is delighted to announce *wander - circle*, curated by Jiang Jun. This exhibition showcases recent works with distinctive styles by Shi Zheng and Gao Ruyun. In the process of circling between Shi Zheng's compelling panoramic virtual video and Gao Ruyun's minimal and sophisticated mechanical site installation, we hope to revisit and infer the two eternal subjects of the sublime and the ordinary.

- Jiang Jun

**Shi Zheng's (b. 1990)** 3D modeling virtual landscape unfolds a panoramic view to engulf the viewer with its adamant red color in a dark space, which is further enhanced by the trembling electronic sound vibrating in the air.

His work, *Embers* first reminds me of Barnett Newman's late work *Who's Afraid of Red Yellow and Blue III*, an exceptional work in large dimension (544 x 245 cm). Looking up-close, the visual impact of the color red becomes a gradual and physical encroachment, where one falls into a momentarily vertigo and loses the sense of space, this is what Newman calls the sublime. He believed the sublime was the ultimate artistic state, which aimed for the transcendence of perception. Newman tried to emanate a sensual "vibration" and "vertigo". Therefore, his red painting in large dimension aimed to stimulate an "absolute" emotion in the viewers when they stood in front of it, it cut off all other emotions and connections to existing meanings, the work seems to suddenly lift the viewer out of the mundane world, and one gets renewed when he lands again, so the world starts anew. This experience is what Jean-Francois Lyotard later calls "The sublime of avant-garde art".

The second impression reminds me of the painting *The Monk by the Sea* by German painter Caspar David Friedrich. In this 1809 painting, we come to look at an abstract and ambiguous landscape of the sea through the perspective of a monk. In addition to its religious subject matter, the work has shown a sense of infinite enigma. It is precisely this sense of abstract integrated with the Holy Spirit of Christianity for the sublime to become a transcendence of the impossible, and a path of discovery towards the shore hidden behind abstraction.

In 1961, the American art historian Robert Rosenblum published, *The Abstract Sublime* in which he traced back the abstract expressionist works of Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko to the British and German landscape paintings from the Romantic period, especially to the works of Caspar David Friedrich.

If the romantic extolled about mysticism, whose desire to transcend the infinite was entrusted to nature, then Barnett Newman and Lyotard's sublime came from the explosion of technological revolution in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – through the exploration of the universe and life sciences, rather, this sublime was inhuman.

Today, we stand in front of Shi Zheng's works, wandering about in this 3D virtual panoramic view of the world where we are offered to perceive another new infinite transcendence - what is widely discussed as the Digital Sublime. It has surpassed the sublime of artificiality from a previous phase, and entered a programmed automatic derivation to allow for infinite extension and expansion, as the effect of this work is presented to us, it's been deeply ingrained into our stream of sensibilities...

**Gao Ruyun's (b.1988)** art practice takes on precisely the opposite direction from Shi Zheng. Since the British scholar Edmund Burke published *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* in 1757, beauty and the sublime became the essential dialectical concepts in the discussions of Western aesthetics, as a result, the thoughts on artistic practice did not sway far from it. Gao Ruyun's works can neither be categorized as beautiful, nor sublime, but ordinary.

In the space of a white cube, the light color of the artwork diminishes the objecthood of the space, thereby allows the work to integrate into the entire field. A gentle mechanical installation activates the cycles of the thread, passing through at different length, and accompanies the spectator's movements in the space, either walking or standing. The soft sound heard from the mechanical operation paired with the viewers' breathing becomes an alternative circulation.

To understand his work, we have to dive in from two different directions. The first being the 1960s wave of minimalist art in the U.S., where discussions on the work of art shifted from objecthood of the work of art to site and theatre. As the pioneer of minimalism, American artist Robert Morris have written *Notes on Sculpture* as early as the 1960s, where he clearly proposed to create the scenario for artistic experience. Morris believes, that the work of art should connect itself to the context in which it exists, whereby to create a sum experience of space, light with the viewer's vision. The content of artistic experience should not be mainly about its internal or the objecthood it tries preserved, but to generate an "expanded field" that includes the sculpture, its immediate environment, the viewer, and moreover, invites the viewer to become physically engaged. And this was the opportunity by which minimalist eventually shifted towards site specificity and theatricality.

The second being the discussion of the ordinary within the Chinese context, that is beyond the scope of beauty and the sublime in Western aesthetics. Among the high art in China, being ordinary has always been praised as the highest realm to achieve, just as the works of Ni Zan has been given the highest esteem. Its ordinariness is precisely because of its empty position, where various possibilities could be engendered, and various directions can be taken from this point of inception. Distinctive forms, strong emotions and atmospheres can easily become simplistic and impartial, which confine the viewer's imagination. This is also what Laozi stated in the *Tao Te Ching*, "The great image has no form", and "the great voice is silent".

Wang Bi from the Third Century annotated "The great voice is silent" that, "Listening without hearing is called silence, the great voice, whose sound may not be heard. When there is sound, there would be divides, sounding either like this or that. This division would not unite the people, thus what has sound is not the great voice."

Likewise the "great image" comprises of all possible forms of representation. The so-called "great image" must be the original, non-deliberate and undifferentiated, Wang Bi stated, "It is only without form and image, sound and noise, would one have access to all, and becomes ubiquitous." The true "greatness" only exists before deliberation, in the ordinary and the void.

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To this end, minimalism seems to resonate with this aspect of oriental aesthetics. The sculpture works reduce their objecthood by turning towards the ordinary in order to allow the works and its environment to come together, so the site and atmosphere would emerge; since the works of art exist subtly in a field, where the audible sound comes from the circular motion of the mechanical installation, the indistinct circulation makes the existence of breathing people apparent of *Dasein*, "being there".

**Shi Zheng** was born in 1990, graduated from School of Intermedia Art of China Academy of Art in 2014, currently lives and works in Shanghai and Chicago. Being a digital media artist, Shi Zheng uses electronic music, Audio-Visual installations and onsite performance in his artistic practice. In 2013 he founded RMBit group along with the artists Neng Huo, Wang Zhipeng, Weng Wei; Shi Zheng is also a member of the Audio-Visual performance group OSC (Open Super Control). Selected exhibitions include: 'New Video in China: New Attitude Since 2010', OCT Anren, Chengdu, 2018; 'East Asia Moving' Screening, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK, 2016; 'UTOPIA & BEYOND', Castello di Rivara, Turin, Italy, 2016; 'FILE Electronic Language International Festival', St. Paul (RMBit), 2014; 'Ars Electronica', Linz, Austria, 2015 & 2012; 'The Lumen Prize 2015', The Lumen Prize Online Gallery, London, UK, 2015; 'NONFIGURATIVE', Shanghai 21st Century Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai, 2015; 'Schizophrenia: sonic alienation', OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Shenzhen, 2015.

**Gao Ruyun** was born in 1988 in Shanghai, in 2015 he graduated from MFA in East China Normal University, currently lives and works in Shanghai. His primary mediums include installation, painting and video.. In the same year he was invited to participate in the artistic residence "The Laforet Summer Vocation Project" in Giffa, Italy. He held solo exhibitions "Infinite Rhythm", Hermes Maison, Shanghai, 2017; "Approaching Zero", M Art Center, Shanghai, 2014. His selected group shows include "Inner Universe", Gallery Yang, Beijing, 2016; "The Suggestive Wheel: An Era of Metaphors", Box Art Space of OCT Harbour, Shenzhen, 2016; " $\infty\Omega$  - Absolute Infinite Game", A4 Contemporary, Chengdu, 2015; "Aura of Poetry", MOCA, Shanghai, 2014; "Regeneration and Reincarnation Exhibition", The State University of New York, Stony Brook, USA, 2011.

**Jiang Jun** was born in 1982, currently lives and works in Shanghai and Hangzhou. He is an artist, critic and columnist for Art Yifeng. In 2013 he graduated from Kunstakademie Münster, where he obtained Akademiebrief and Meisterschüler Titel. He is a member of International Institute for Public Art (IPA), researcher at Public Art Cooperation Center (PACC), a member of China Information & Interaction design committee (IIDC) and a founding member of Contemporary Art Investigation Bureau. Jiang Jun is currently a PhD candidate of visual culture study at China Academy of Arts and Peking University.

Media Contact: [press@aike-gallery.com](mailto:press@aike-gallery.com) / +86 21 52520010