

LENIN IN 1918

GALERIEURSMEILE 麦勒画廊

鄢醒 近作 Yan Xing Recent Works

2013



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鄢醒
近作

Yan
Xing
Recent Works

鄢醒的
“活人画”
——关于鄢醒
的行为艺术
策略

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Les tableaux de
Yan Xing: On the
performative
strategy of
Yan Xing's art

by Raphael Gygax

一面粉刷成白色的砖墙面前，一位年轻人背对着观众唱着：“天涯呀海角，觅呀觅知音……”他身穿黑白条纹衬衫，外套一个皮坎肩，歌唱完后依然保留着原来的姿势，用诗意的语言进行近一个小时的独白，听起来是在讲述自己的家庭故事：他哀诉父亲的缺失，说家庭暴力、虐待和自己的性取向。他一直不让观众看到他的脸，这不仅唤起了一种神秘感，而且也创造了一个空白，创造了行为者和观众之间的空白。这种异化效应使得观察者认为，行为者所表达的并不是对个人不幸的青年时代的回忆，不是在见证人面前复读一个自传性的文本并展示由此而来的露阴癖，而是一种与“活人画”(Tableau Vivant)传统相关联的、如诗如画的行为艺术。

这件题为《DADDY项目》(2011)的作品是年轻的中国艺术家酈醒(1986年出生，现生活、工作于北京和洛杉矶两地)艺术生涯开始时的作品，他这一作品已经初具戏剧性表演的作品策略，而这一策略是其目前阶段性作品总集的特色。酈醒致力于画面的解构与建构。在酈醒这里，法国心理分析大师雅各·拉冈(Jacques Lacan)传统中的家庭结构开始于主体，而按照后现代的传统，主体也不再定义为一个整体，而是定义为“碎片化的马赛克”。他作为艺术家在调研工作中面向不同的领域，从艺术史、文学、政治直至哲学。比如他的作品《列宁在1918》(2013)，一个类似西洋镜的装置，就把对现代经典的改编——不论是对康斯坦丁·布朗库西(Constantin Brâncuși, 1876–1957)、亨利·马蒂斯(Henri Matisse, 1869–1954)还是对卡西米尔·马列维奇(Kazimir Malevich, 1879–1935)作品的改编——与自己的作品——摆出古典姿势的运动员的黑白照片——结合在一起，引起观察者对艺术的展示与经典化予以反思，同时也对艺术在共产主义国家内被工具化进行反思。这位毕业于四川美术学院的艺术师近两年来以其具有“活人画”特色的综合性装置为国际观众所知。¹不论从形式美学还是从内容上看，其行为艺术作品《DADDY项目》都可以被看作20世纪60和70年代以艺术家主体为中心的经典人体艺术传统上的典型行为艺术，但更可以被看作“有台词的‘活人画’”。艺术家自己的活动范围只有极小的变化，其身体也仅仅是叙述文本所用的音箱，他背对观众的姿势划下了一个明确的界限。显现生命力的指令——我们可以回想玛丽娜·阿布拉莫维奇(Marina Abramović, 1946–)通过圣像画般的行为作品来探求自己身体的脆弱和痛苦的极限(而且直接面对观众)——在酈醒这里被忽略。在这种意义上，这位艺术家遵循着当代行为艺术史近20年来的一个趋势，即对行为者(受苦的)身体的兴趣转向对行为艺术相关的空间与语境的关注。在这种语境中，行为艺术意味着用艺术家的身体给空间以活力，用身体来进驻、占据空间，或者像酈醒的《现代，更现代的》(2012)、《性喜剧》(2013)和《甜蜜电影》(2013)等作品那样，把诞生事件的因素或

表演分配给其他表演者，以此来实现与空间的关系。艺术家的工作方式与后戏剧化戏剧的导演相似，首先展示的不是经典的戏剧台词，而是后戏剧的戏剧符号，比如并列结构、无等差、同时性、丰富过量或立体性，他的主要任务是对选材和组合分析的运用。因此，哈尔·福斯特(Hal Foster)认为后现代艺术家是“符号操纵者”，维克托·布尔津(Victor Burgin)以其为“现存符号的协调者”²。

行为作品《甜蜜电影》于第55届威尼斯双年展平行展——“未来世代艺术奖”(Contarini Polignac宫殿，维克多·平丘克基金会)上演。观众在作品展时成了一场虚构的色情电影拍摄准备工作的见证人，可以看到摄制组人员专心布置照明或装饰品，还有一位躺在床上搔首弄姿的演员。但是，因为第二位演员缺席，真正拍摄的这个行为永远不会进行。这个叙事因素不断重复，成了一种持久的循环，或者一种不断充斥着微小变化的“长久行为作品(long duration performance)”，观察者则发现自己正置身于一个活动的“活人画”中。

关于行为艺术如何使得艺术消费者的角色发生转变的论述已有不少，经常被指出的一点是，通过这种媒介，观众的参与潜力如果不是成了作品的有机组成部分，也至少得到了提高。酈醒的作品虽然也一样要求观察者以自己全身心的多重敏感性参与，但首先是联系其冥想—反思能力。如同传统的“活人画”突然把一个已经存在的画作题材毫无过渡地转化到生活中来，观察者在这里也看到熟知的画面突然被“活化”了——近几十年来，营业额数以亿计的色情行业经常成为不同媒体的话题，获得了更高的能见度。因此，观察这件“活人画”作品，正是因为“行为”的缺失，就提出了对这个行业生产模式的结构性问题，而且因为恰恰在一个双年展的语境内，又出现了与此平行的艺术生产问题，但同时也针对我们社会中关于“性”的生产与产业化提出了问题。

在18和19世纪的戏剧中，“活人画”被作为一种对观众有强烈吸引作用的意外效果来使用，但首先也是作为一种反思因素来使用。德尼·狄德罗(Denis Diderot)在其戏剧理论中就此写道：这种安排符合画布上的一幅写实油画，各要素的安排就像身体的各个部位一样，必须循着某个在运动的部位，从而定格具有重要意义的行动瞬间，从此刻的这一行动中，我们也能窥测到角色的未来。³行为过程中某一个瞬间的冻结，也就是演出流程的中断，首先被看作用于反思的间隙，可以使观众对故事情节再次进行理解和思考，“活人画”就成了一个需要得到诠释的空白。“空白”这一概念主要是由沃尔夫冈·伊瑟尔(Wolfgang Iser)在20世纪70年代末进行研究和定义的。⁴他更强调接受者的作用，而这一作用此前一直被忽略，因为作者和文本这两个层面一直站在前台。伊瑟尔认为，文本中的空白——这里讲的是后结构主义

“At the edge of the sky and the end of the sea, I look for someone who understands me,” a young man sings in Chinese. Dressed in a black-and-white striped shirt beneath a leather vest, he stands before a whitewashed brick wall, his back to the audience. Having concluded his song, the protagonist segues into a lyrical monologue about what would seem to be his family history. Virtually motionless, he speaks for almost an hour; he laments the loss of his father. He recalls scenes of domestic violence and abuse, and examines his own sexual identity. The fact that we never see his face not only lends him an air of mystery, but it also creates a blank, a void, that sets the performer apart from his audience. This distancing effect prevents us from reading the scene before our eyes as an act of personal recollection—the presentation of an autobiographical account of an unhappy adolescence before invited witnesses, with the aspect of exhibitionism that this would inevitably imply. What we are watching, we realize, is an imagistic-poetic performance in the tradition of the *tableau vivant*.

Entitled *DADDY Project* (2011), the performance piece, an early work of the young Chinese artist Yan Xing (*1986, lives and works in Beijing and Los Angeles), already hints at a theatrical-performative artistic strategy that is characteristic of his evolving oeuvre. Yan Xing explores the construction and deconstruction of images. Following the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, he anchors the construction of his figures in the subject, which he conceives in postmodernist terms as a “fragmented mosaic” rather than a unified whole. In his research, the artist draws inspiration from a wide range of disciplines, from art history and literature to politics and philosophy. For instance, in *Lenin in 1918* (2013), a sort of peep-box installation, Yan combines adaptations of modern classics by artists including Brancusi (1876–1957), Matisse (1869–1954), and Malevich (1879–1935) with his own works and black-and-white nude photographs of athletic bodies in an antiquated setting, prompting the viewer to reflect on representation and canon-formation in art, but also on how communist political systems exploit art for their own purposes. Trained as a painter at the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, Chongqing, Yan has come to the

attention of international audiences over the past two years with his performative-installational settings, many of which distinctly resemble *tableaux vivants*.¹ In terms of both its formal aesthetic and its content, *DADDY Project*, for example, would seem to be a “speaking *tableau*” rather than a classical performance in the tradition of 1960s and 1970s Body Art, in which the artist as subject is central. The artist stays within a tightly circumscribed space; the only function of his body is as a medium for the transmission of a spoken text, and by turning his back to the audience, he draws a clear boundary. The piece undercuts the doctrine that performance art is about the exhibition of aliveness—compare this with the iconic performances of Marina Abramović (1946–), who doggedly charts the limits of what her body can bear (and in so doing addresses the viewer directly). In that sense, Yan’s work is in step with a trend in the contemporary performance art of the past two decades, in which the focus has shifted away from the (suffering) body of the performer and toward the relational space and context of performance. Performance, in this context, is about the way the artist’s body animates, inhabits, or occupies this space—or, in many of Yan’s works such as *Modernist*, *Super-Modernist* (2012), *The Sex Comedy*, or *The Sweet Movie* (both 2013), about the delegation of the element that constitutes the piece as an event or live presentation to other performing artists. In this regard, Yan’s practice bears resemblance to the work of the director of post-dramatic theater, which foregrounds not a classical dramatic text but instead post-dramatic theatrical signs such as parataxis, non-hierarchy, simultaneity, superabundance, or physical intensity. The artist’s two chief tasks, then, are selection and combination. Hal Foster describes the postmodern artist as a “manipulator of signs”; Victor Burgin calls him the “coordinator of existing forms”².

In the installation-performance, *The Sweet Movie*, which was shown as part of the Victor Pinchuk Foundation’s *Future Generation Art Prize* presentation at the Palazzo Contarini Polignac during the 55th Venice Biennale, the viewer witnessed what looked like the set preparation for a pornographic movie shoot. The members of the film crew were absorbed in their various tasks: some were setting

意义上的空白——是一种反思因素，只有通过这种因素才能构成与接受者的交流。伊瑟尔定义的空白远远超出了空缺或者空隙的意思，而是认为它具有召唤的能力，只有这样，纲领化的思考才得以被理解。酈醒启动机似的“活人画”以同样的势能发生作用。他对演出者的安排可以看作模式化的表演，身体成了演出场所，对权力的谈判和对艺术史—社会学的、全球经济的或者生命政治问题的讨论在此得以进行。

艺术史家霍斯特·布雷德坎普 (Horst Bredekamp) 在其《图像行为理论》(*Theorie des Bildakts*, 2010) 研究中讨论图画激发或引发行为的可能性，在其分类学结构中加入了“模式化的图像行为”这个概念。⁵ 图像行为这个概念是借鉴“言语行为”这个概念而来的，用来指行为的效应，强调图像本身的作用，“图像作用”这个说法也经常提到。“模式化的图像行为”的特点是通过身体布局赋予图像以效应、作用，所以，布雷德坎普对此的定义也从“活人画”入手。他对“模式化的图像行为”作出以下定义：“对模式化的图像行为的定义关系到模式意义的复现，而模式是认知与行为的身体基础。模式化的图像行为包括在以直接的方式获得生命或者模拟活力方面取得样板式的作用的图像。”⁶ 他继续阐述道：“‘活人画’的不同形式，都是用活人作为图像载体来消除展品与人之间的距离的尝试所衍生而来的。观察者能够在自己面对的图像中与自己邂逅，这是‘活人画’的强项[……]把图像与身体联系在一起，其意图就是要通过观察者视觉上的认同，对表现出来的姿态所表达的内容和形式进行特殊的体认，达到对观察者进行模式性的动员。”⁷

酈醒作品中的演出者可以被看作效应体，是艺术家微妙地安置于景中的，同样也是为了能够传达一种社会政治的解读方式。这样，他的许多作品就可以放在一个更大的框架内解读，因为这些作品指向近些年来被讨论越来越多的一种“权力机制的方案”。米歇尔·福柯 (Michel Foucault) 在其《认知的意志》(*The Will to Knowledge*, 1976) 一书中引入了“生命政治”或“生命权力”的概念，⁸ 用来描述现代国家越来越多地加强对人体控制的趋势，描述现代人作为主体在系统化生产对身体和生命的权力影响中的问题。按照福柯的观点，这一趋势开始于17世纪，从这时开始，焦点从“死”转向了“生”：“我们可以说‘让人死’或‘让人活的古老权力已经被‘让人活’或‘不让人死的权力取代了。’”⁹ 生命政治是一种提高生命生产的技术，用以推动、管理并保障更多的生命，最终经营生命；特别是鉴于酈醒的祖国——中国内地对“性”极成问题的控制，从“生命政治”讨论的视角来看，接受他的作品会赢得更多的维度。

酈醒在录像装置作品《脏的艺术》(2013)中，把九个放映不同“活人画”的监视器一起放置于一个用樟木制成的

木柜内，由此形成一个万花筒似的整体图像。这个作品中占主要地位的是裸体男性躯体，且多是体现同性情欲的构图，比如两个裸体男性的背影、一对热吻的情侣，或者(至少在此语境中)有暧昧情欲色调的洗脚礼。另一部影片中仅仅在一个基座上显示了皮埃尔·保罗·帕索里尼 (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1922–1975) 的生平数据，而这位电影导演正喜欢在自己的作品中使用“活人画”这种艺术手法，比如在《软乳酪》(*La Ricotta*, 1963) 中借鉴于罗素·菲伦蒂诺 (Rosso Fiorentino, 1494–1540) 的《耶稣被卸下十字架》(*Deposition from the Cross*, 1521) 的场景。整个画面通过一个仅仅显示着一个“泻”字的屏幕趋于完整。这样，酈醒用录像形式的“活人画”创造了一个复杂的符号系统，我们可以从前述的生命政治角度来解读这个系统。酈醒以其最近的作品成功地做出了一个令人内心矛盾的展现，其跨步于肯定和批判之间，细腻的角色扮演引人深思。

“天涯呀海角，觅呀觅知音……”

翻译：贾枝平

¹ 酈醒的很多摄影作品同样具有“活人画”特色，比如《艺术，太艺术的》(2013)，但本文将不对此进行讨论。

² 参见维克托·布尔津 (Victor Burgin): 《Situational Aesthetics》，载于《Studio International》，第178号，1969年，第118–121页。

参见哈尔·福斯特 (Hal Foster): 《Subversive Signs》，载于《Art in America》，第70号，1982年，第88–92页。

³ 参见德尼·狄德罗 (Denis Diderot): 《狄德罗先生的戏剧》，德文版，斯图加特：Reclam出版社，1986年，法文原版首发于1757年。

⁴ 参见沃尔夫冈·伊瑟尔 (Wolfgang Iser): 《Der Akt des Lesens – Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung》(《阅读行为——美学作用理论》)，慕尼黑：Wilhelm Fink出版社，1976年。沃尔夫冈·伊瑟尔 (1926–2007)，德国英语语言文学学者、文学研究学者。他提出一种理论，认为文学文本只有通过阅读这个行为才能发挥其作用。在研究阅读这个行为的过程中，他受后来对接受美学产生很大影响的波兰哲学家英伽登 (Ingarden, 1893–1970) 的影响，提出了文本中的“空白”以及“内在的读者”的理论，认为文本只有这样才能形成与读者的对话，文学因此而成为交流。

⁵ 参见霍斯特·布雷德坎普 (Horst Bredekamp): 《Theorie des Bildakts》(《图像行为理论》)，柏林：Suhrkamp出版社，2010年，第48–56页、第103–124页。

⁶ 同上，第104页。

⁷ 同上，第120页。

⁸ 福柯没有明确区分“生命权力”和“生命政治”这两个概念。这两个概念见于米歇尔·福柯：《Der Wille zum Wissen. Sexualität und Wahrheit》，法兰克福：Suhrkamp出版社，1977年(《认知的意志，性与真》；中文译名：《性经验史》，上海人民出版社，2005年)，法文原文首发：《La volonté de savoir》，巴黎：Gallimard出版社，1976年。

⁹ 同上，第165页(中文版第89页)。

up the lighting, others were arranging the décor, and there was even a naked actor lolling on the bed. The actual event, the shoot, never happened because there was no second performer. So this one narrative moment was repeated endlessly, with ever so slight variations, in a sort of permanent loop or performance *à longue durée*. The spectator found himself inside a moving *tableau vivant*.

Much has been written about how performance art has changed the role of the art consumer—it is widely argued that the new medium affords him considerably greater opportunity to participate and that such participation may even be an integral component of the work. In keeping with this trend, Yan Xing’s art involves the spectator with his physiological reality and multisensory receptivity; its primary appeal, however, is to his contemplative and reflective faculties. Like the classical *tableau vivant*, which adopted a motif from an existing painting and transplanted it *tel quel* into real life, Yan’s piece brings an image to “life” with which the viewer is familiar. In the last few decades, the porn industry, a billion-dollar business, has been the object of much media scrutiny, raising its public visibility. The spectacle of Yan’s *tableau*—which pointedly elides the “act” at its core—raises structural questions about the forms of production in the industry and the ways in which it resembles the production of art (especially in the context of a biennial), but also about the productivity and commercialization of sexuality in our society.

In 18th and 19th century theater, the *tableau vivant* was used as a surprise effect designed to catch the audience’s attention, but also—and more importantly—to encourage reflection. Denis Diderot pinpointed this function in his theory of the theater, writing that the theatrical *tableau vivant* resembled a painting on canvas whose composition was designed to achieve the effect of utmost fidelity to reality. The arrangement of the elements, like that of the parts of a body, must be guided by a single salient aspect so as to capture a significant moment of the action in which the characters’ future is focused on a single point.³ Freezing a moment of the action and disrupting the dramatic flow was thought to afford a pause for reflection that would allow the spectator to review the action

before the mind’s eye and consider its implications. The *tableau* becomes a blank that demands interpretation. The concept of the blank was studied and defined by Wolfgang Iser and others around the late 1970s.⁴ Against the focus on the author and his text in earlier literary theory, Iser emphasized the crucial role of the reader, which scholars had largely neglected. In his poststructuralist perspective, the textual blank constitutes a moment of reflection that initiates the text’s communication with the reader. This definition of the blank goes far beyond a simple elision or gap: The blank has an evocative power that creates room for programmatic considerations. Yan Xing’s perpetual *tableaux* operate with the same dynamic. His arrangements of performers may also be read as schematic displays. Their bodies become the ‘site’ or ‘scene’ of a negotiation of power and an exploration of issues in the history and sociology of art, global economics, or biopolitics.

In his study of what he calls *Theory of the Image Act* (2010), the art historian Horst Bredekamp examines the ability of pictures to initiate or provoke actions; one rubric in his typology of “picture acts” is the “schematic picture act.”⁵ The general concept of the “picture act”—the echo of the term “speech act” highlights its performative nature—is designed to bring out the characteristic agency of the picture (what critics frequently also call its “effect” or “impact”). In his definition of the “schematic picture act”, which is distinguished by the way the picture attains agency through compositions of bodies, Bredekamp, not accidentally, refers to the *tableau vivant*: “This return of the significance of the schema as the physical basis of cognition and behavior underlies the definition of the *schematic picture act*. It comprises pictures that yield paradigmatic effects by coming to life or simulating aliveness in immediate fashion.”⁶ Bredekamp goes on to argue that, “the different forms of the *tableau vivant* are variations on the attempt to undo the distance between artifact and human being through the use of human beings as pictorial media. The strength of the living image lies in its enabling the viewer to encounter his own self in his pictorial counterpart [...] The amalgamation of picture and body aims at a schematic activation of the viewer effected by his intuitive identification,

which induces a particular sort of engagement with the contents and forms of the poses depicted.”⁷

The performers in Yan Xing’s art may be described as effect bodies the artist subtly “directs” in productions that simultaneously convey his views on society and politics. Many of his works may be read as part of a larger project revolving around the “concept of a market mechanism” that has played a growing role in debates in recent years. In his book *The Will to Knowledge* (1976), Michel Foucault introduces the concept of biopolitics or biopower⁸ to describe the tendency of the modern state to assert ever more comprehensive control over the human body: The modern human subject becomes a problem in the systemic production of effects of power on bodies and lives. According to Foucault, this tendency first emerges in the 17th century as the focus of interest shifts from death to life: “One might say that the ancient right to take life or let live was replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death.”⁹ Biopolitics is a technology that harnesses life to increase production and promote even more life, to administrate and safeguard it—and ultimately exploit its economic potential. In light of the highly problematic regimentation of sexuality in Yan Xing’s native China, a perspective informed by the discourse of biopolitics uncovers another dimension in his work.

For the video installation *Dirty Art* (2013), Yan sets nine monitors in a camphor wood cabinet. The monitors, arranged as a block, show different filmic *tableaux vivants* that add up to a kaleidoscopic overall picture. Its dominant motif is the naked male body, often in homoerotic visual compositions—two male nudes shot from behind, a couple kissing passionately, a foot washing that (at least in this context) bears ambivalent erotic connotations. One film shows nothing but a pedestal inscribed with the dates of the birth and death of Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975), a film director who frequently used the filmic *tableau vivant* as a stylistic device (consider the reenactment of Rosso Fiorentino’s *Deposition from the Cross* in *La Ricotta*, 1963). This panorama is complemented by a monitor on which only the Chinese character *xie*, meaning diarrhea, appears. Yan thus creates a complex semiotic system based on filmic *tableaux*

vivants that lend themselves to interpretation in the framework of the discourse of biopolitics. In his evolving oeuvre, he devises a representation of various complex issues that carefully maintains an ambivalent stance between affirmation and critique in a subtle and thought-provoking form of role-play.

At the edge of the sky and the end of the sea, I look for someone who understands me.

Translated from the German by Gerrit Jackson

¹ Many of Yan Xing’s photographic works, such as *Arty, Super-Arty* (2013) or the three in *Two videos, three photographs, several related masterpieces, and American art* (2013), are similarly *tableau vivant*-like.

² See Hal Foster, “Subversive Signs”, *Art in America*, no. 70 (1982): 88–92; Victor Burgin, “Situational Aesthetics”, *Studio International*, no. 178 (1969): 118–21.

³ See Denis Diderot, “Entretiens sur *Le fils naturel*” [1757], in *Œuvres*, vol. 4, ed. Jacques-André Naigeon (Paris: Desray and Deterville, 1798), 113–238.

⁴ Wolfgang Iser (1926–2007) was a German scholar of English and comparative literature. His theory of the readers’ aesthetic response to literature explicates the view that the literary text is realized in the act of reading. Following Roman Ingarden (1893–1970), a Polish philosopher whose work was a major influence on the later aesthetics of reception, Iser examined what it means to read and developed the theory of the textual blank as well as the implicit reader, features through which texts enter into a dialogue with the reader: literature becomes communication. See Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

⁵ Horst Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 48–56, 103–24.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁸ See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction* (London: Penguin, 1976). (The book was originally published in French as *La volonté de savoir* in 1976 and later reissued in English as *The Will to Knowledge*.) Foucault does not draw a rigorous distinction between biopower and biopolitics.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.