A perverse nostalgia seems to inflect queer bodies. Of course, our remembrances are perverse only because the memories we attempt to exhume are too distant and traumatic to be retrieved: we end up grasping at straws as these mnemonic quests often prove futile and disillusioning. Still, something in the queer past continues to dangerously draw its subjects back. Can queers ever elude the cyclicity of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls "Oedipal repetitiveness" to find healthier alternatives for belonging and love? Through his practice, Chinese artist Yan Xing addresses the lingering dis-ease of queer contemporaneity. Desire, frequently dismissed as an unworthy subject of historical and discursive engagement, becomes inextricably embroiled with Yan's archival impulse. In *The Sex Comedy* (2013), three actors awkwardly handle wooden dildo replicas that have been fashioned after archaeological relics. While two actors fondle a dildo suggestively and gingerly, another meticulously polishes one with a toothbrush before neurotically examining it with a microscope, appearing to check for dusty remains.

While Hal Foster's engagement with the historical (re)turn in art sees the failure of the past as utopian and hence ripe for remedying, queer failure remains stubbornly unrepentant. Queer subjects continue to desire the impossible, embodying failure and eschewing narratives of clarity and progression. This unnerving constitution is especially evident in another of Yan's videos, *The Sweet Movie* (2013): on the set of a gay pornographic film shoot, an irascible director fruitlessly attempts to re-create orgasmic ecstasy with just one lonely actor while he berates the accompanying actor's tardiness.

Yan Xing (Chinese, b. 1986) is an artist who lives and works in Beijing and Los Angeles. He is represented by Galerie Urs Meile, Lucerne/Beijing.

Yan Xing's solo exhibition "The Thief" is on view at Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, from 29 August – 25 October.

Binghao Wong is a curator and writer interested in discovering new lexica for queer in contemporary art and media. Recent curatorial projects include "We Are Losing Inertia" (2014) and "Asymmetric Grief" (2015).

Image: Yan Xing *Kill (the) TV-Set*, 2012 Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing/Lucerne

The artist repeatedly attempts to personify sensuality in his videos *Sexy* (2011) and *The History of Fugue* (2012). In the former, Yan's efforts at creating ecstatic poses on a ravine are consistently disrupted by the unforgiving weather and terrain; in the latter, the artist fails to mimic the motionless musculature of Robert Mapplethorpe's homoerotic photographs. Slippage paradoxically characterizes the artist's aspirations toward stillness.

As queer bodies perform the nuances of their gender and sexuality through time, Yan's choice of video, a time-based medium, aptly accentuates their ontological fluidity. Strangely, howeer, he also uses video's mobility to embalm specific moments from queer past. Intrinsically and formally, Yan again presents himself with an impossible task. Incompatibility resurfaces, yet again, as a wry consolation of queer life. But even in spite of such irresolution, Yan and his actors seem to get off on rejection and failure, shunning salubriousness.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Yan's most notable work, *DADDY Project* (2011), a searing confessional portrait of the artist's encounters with domestic abuse and disappointing father figures. Daddy issues, like nightmarish histories that have been intentionally forgotten, send queers on an interminable search for affection and answers. Yan echoes this sentiment when he begins the video by elegiacally singing in his native Mandarin Chinese: "I look for someone who understands me." His affecting, tantalizingly universal melancholia articulates the incomprehensible, self-thwarting logic of queers who, in their desperate itinerancy, always manage to look for solace in all the wrong places. 👁

"QUEER BODIES PERFORM THE NUANCES OF THEIR GENDER AND SEXUALITY THROUGH TIME"

HIGHLIGHTS 亮点