



GALERIEURSMEILE 麦勒画廊

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鄢醒 贼

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论展示

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On Display

by Sam Thorne

酈醒的艺术与展览和炫示有着密切的关系。在他的作品中，展示（及其历史、政治与变态）常常是最关键的环节。这或许与一种特殊的状态有关——在酈醒起步尚短却已然密集的艺术生涯中，他创作过的所有作品都曾被展出。他的作品拥有如此特别的能见度，使工作室内的创作与工作室外的展览几乎环环相扣。与浪漫主义艺术家将工作室视为逃离外部世界的避难所不同，对酈醒而言，工作室与外面的世界相互渗透，甚至相互重叠。正如他曾在一次访谈中所说：“我肯定是那类伴随着展览而工作的艺术家。”

现代展览形式的歧异历史穿插在酈醒的多件作品之中。展览策略与震颤被夸大，展览多样的能力（能够分类，也能够混淆；能够提升，也能够排斥）成为焦点。酈醒目前的作品与展览大都机智地采用类型化的标题（如2013年在麦勒画廊北京部举办的展览“近作”）或类别化的标题（如2011年的行为作品《现实主义》）。同时也有一些作品戏拟学术化的严肃标题，如《接受史》或《赋格的历史》（两件都是2012年的作品）。我们可以在其中听到一位年轻艺术家的回声，他对历史和正典的建构机制有着浓烈的兴趣，他怀着蔑视，对自身有敏锐的洞察，清楚自己该在何处下手进行干预，在这诸般态度与认识之间行动、游走。

从四川美术学院油画系毕业后，酈醒于北京生活了四年，并于2013年移居美国洛杉矶。他说，从小到大所有影响过他的人物——从帕索里尼（Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1922—1975）、让·谷克多（Jean Cocteau, 1889—1963）到侯麦（Éric Rohmer, 1920—2010）、爱德华·霍普（Edward Hopper, 1882—1967），都是美国人或欧洲人。正如酈醒在一次访谈中对汉斯·乌尔里希·奥布里斯特（Hans Ulrich Obrist）所说，“我接触最多的信息以及材料都来自于西方。”确实，文化传播的大量媒介及其被博物馆制度化、被国家工具化的方式似乎是酈醒的几件近作之间的关联元素。比如，有一件作品有着貌似非常具体却依旧暧昧不明的标题——《两部录像，三张照片，几件与之相关的杰作和美国艺术》（2013）。这一组在酈醒移居美国不久后创作的黑白照片中，我们看到身体柔韧性极佳的男子在努力模仿着古典艺术中运动员——弓箭手、掷标枪者、推铅球者的姿态。初看之下，“美国艺术”在此较之一种国别界定，更接近一种英雄式的、男子气概的风格。

然而，这样一种解读太过草率。首先，作品中男子的姿态呼应着酈醒在他的中学时代便已开始了解的罗伯特·梅普勒索普（Robert Mapplethorpe, 1946—1989）的经典争议之作《黑书》（*Black Book*, 1986）中人物的姿态。这一关联立即将这些作品与“文化战争”的苦楚年代联系起来，在当时，美国许多艺术机构承受着共和党右翼的极大压力，展出梅普勒索

普的作品甚至会遭遇永久闭馆的威胁。不仅摄影家本人成了争议人物，他的作品也成为检验艾滋病危机最惨烈的年代中“美国性”之本质因素的试金石。酈醒对梅普勒索普的挪用有着双重的复杂性，因为梅普勒索普的《黑书》本身便含有引用的成分。（值得一提的是，酈醒在其2015年的作品《筋》中再次对一位具有争议的美国艺术家——卡尔·安德烈（Carl Andre）进行挪用，这位艺术家对于呈现身体的方式有着非常不同的理解。）正如道格拉斯·克林普（Douglas Crimp）所说，梅普勒索普的人体摄影“运用了战前工作室摄影的美学风格”，令人回忆起曼·雷（Man Ray, 1890—1976）、爱德华·韦斯顿（Edward Weston, 1886—1958）和爱德华·史泰钦（Edward Steichen, 1879—1973）的摄影作品，然而其中有一点关键性的差别：“梅普勒索普将韦斯顿作品中的儿童换成了极富性感的成年男子身体。”¹克林普作为艺术史家活跃于20世纪70年代的纽约，正是所谓“图像一代”（Pictures Generation，得名于克林普于1977年策划的同名重要展览）的天下，这一代艺术家的作品聚焦于挪用和展现的政治。正如克林普的友人及合作者克莱格·欧文斯（Craig Owens）所写，展现“不是（也不能是）中立的，而是在我们的文化中的一种权力的行动（甚至是最基础的行动）。”²

这一观察深入酈醒许多作品的核心。以这组作品为例，我们看到一位中国年轻艺术家用来替换梅普勒索普作品中性感的黑人身体（他们本身便含有对战前摄影的引用成分）的依然是更多的人体。然而，梅普勒索普作品中的模特在工作室的背景前摆着姿态，酈醒的模特却是在沙漠的灌木丛中摆着姿态，身后是没有云的天空。仅这一处与酈醒作品标题中的“美国艺术”并提便已具有特别的意味，其中环境的布置与20世纪多数美国艺术作品对于阴影的热衷截然相反。正如莎拉·K·里奇（Sarah K. Rich）最近所写：“大多数美国艺术家都是黑暗中的居民……在过去一个世纪中的多数时间里，美国前卫艺术都潜伏在缺少维生素D的环境中：烟雾缭绕的酒吧、地下酒馆……深夜码头、下东区的非法住所，还有其他各种舒舒服服地损害身心健康的所在。”³酈醒的这组作品呈现出更多的内容：黑人的身体带有象征性的伤痕。其中呈现的不仅仅是美国艺术营造姿态的历史，还有对于身体的展示如何与展示和物化的不光彩历史有着无法撇清的复杂关系。酈醒将这些照片与精心放置在镀钛金属台上的两条皮鞭和几枚木制阳具一同展示，仿佛意欲强调这些奴役与S&M、爱国主义与种族歧视、愉悦与痛苦，是如何层层相叠。这些物件或许就是作品标题中“几件与之相关的杰作”吧。纵使酈醒的作品朝着黑暗移动，能见度依旧是一切。

《列宁在1918》（2013）则涉及国家资助的前卫艺术。我们看到一个“白立方中的白立方”（酈醒2012年

The art of Yan Xing is, you could say, highly attuned to exhibitions and exhibitionism. In his work, display is what is most often at stake—its histories, politics, and perversities. Perhaps this is connected to the fact that over the course of his short, though already densely packed career, Yan Xing is in the unusual situation of having exhibited virtually every work of art he has made. This has produced a rare and peculiar form of visibility, whereby his studio practice and exhibitions are almost inseparable. Rather than the romantic conception of the artist's studio as a refuge from the world beyond, the two realms are, for Yan Xing, porous or even overlaid. As he once noted in an interview, “I must be one of those ‘exhibition-type’ artists.”

The divergent histories of the modern exhibition form are woven through a number of Yan Xing's works. Tropes and tics are magnified, bringing into focus the multifarious ways that exhibitions can classify, as well as confuse, and elevate as much as they exclude. Several of Yan Xing's works and shows to date have been titled in a way that seems either archly typological, such as his exhibition *Recent Works* (2013) at Galerie Urs Meile Beijing, or classificatory, as with his 2011 performance, *Realism*. Around that time, several of Yan Xing's works also carried weighty, mock-academic titles: *The History of Reception*, for example, or *The History of Fugue* (both 2012). These have the ring of a young artist with a keen interest in the mechanisms of how histories and canons are built, shifting between disdain and a penetrating sense of himself and where he might intervene.

Yan Xing studied oil painting at the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, before living in Beijing for four years and then moving to Los Angeles in 2013. Growing up, he has said, his influences—who range from Pier Paolo Pasolini and Jean Cocteau to Eric Rohmer and Edward Hopper—were American or European. As Yan Xing once noted in an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, “Most of the information and materials I had were from the West.” Indeed, the myriad ways in which culture is transmitted, how it can become codified by museums or is instrumentalized by the state, seems to be what connects a number of Yan Xing's more recent works. Take, for example, this apparently specific, yet highly ambiguous title: *Two Videos, Three Photographs, Several Related Masterpieces, and American Art* (2013). In these black-and-white photos, made soon after Yan Xing

relocated to the United States, we see lithe men assiduously replicating classical athletic poses—that of an archer, a javelin-thrower, a shot-putter. At first glance, “American art” here seems less a national designation than a heroic, muscular style.

But that might be too hasty a reading. For one thing, the men's poses echo those found in Robert Mapplethorpe's classic and controversial *Black Book* (1986), which Yan Xing first came across when he was in middle school. This reference immediately connects the works to the bitter years of the Culture Wars, when a number of American art institutions came under extreme pressure from the Republican right and were even threatened with closure for daring to exhibit Mapplethorpe's work. Not only was the photographer a controversial figure, his work became a litmus test for what actually constituted “American” during the worst years of the AIDS crisis. Yan Xing's appropriation of Mapplethorpe is doubly complex, given the range of quotations already at play in the original *Black Book*. (It should be noted that Yan Xing's 2015 work, *Tendon*, also appropriates the work of a controversial American artist, in this case Carl Andre, who has a very different sense of what bodily presence constitutes.) As Douglas Crimp has argued, Mapplethorpe's nudes “appropriate the stylistics of prewar studio photography,” recalling the photographs of Man Ray, Edward Weston, and Edward Steichen, but with one crucial difference: “Mapplethorpe puts in the place of Weston's child the fully sexualized adult male body.”¹ Crimp's formative years as an art historian were in New York in the late 1970s, a time of the so-called Pictures Generation (a name that came from the seminal exhibition he curated in 1977), whose work focused on appropriation and the politics of representation. As Crimp's friend and collaborator Craig Owens once wrote, representation “is not—nor can it be—neutral; it is an act—indeed, the founding act—of power in our culture.”²

This observation cuts to the core of a number of works by Yan Xing. In this example, we see a young Chinese artist replacing Mapplethorpe's sexualized black bodies—themselves already quotations of prewar photography—with still more men. However, while Mapplethorpe's models pose against studio backdrops, Yan Xing's pose in the desert scrub, silhouetted against a cloudless sky. This fact alone, returning to the “American art” of Yan Xing's title, has a particular valence, in that

的作品《现代，更现代的》也是采用这样的形式），其中的一面墙有巨大的矩形开口。白立方（作为现代主义空间的典范，通过排除外部世界来确保自身的“中立性”）由此被改造成一个商店橱窗。（这令人想到酈醒2013年的另一件作品《脏的艺术》，基于爱德华·霍普1927年表现药店橱窗的绘画作品《药店》。）《列宁在1918》因其展览设计成为一个杂糅的空间：我们看到不同年代的展台，一条护墙线贯穿整个空间。一切都显得有些似是而非，或者说并未与“原作”（无论“原作”这个词在这间“镜厅”之中含义如何）全然一致。我们看到许多容易认出的作品的全白版本，从马列维奇（Kazimir Malevich, 1879—1935）、布朗库西（Constantin Brâncuși, 1876—1957），到塞尚（Paul Cézanne, 1839—1906）、马蒂斯（Henri Matisse, 1869—1954）。

其中的每一件作品都通过博物馆标准的展签一丝不苟地罗列出来，然而其中有一位艺术家并非“名副其实”：Theodor Hey是一位20世纪初的摄影师，关于他的信息并不多见，Theodor Hey在此只是被酈醒予以借用并进而塑造的一个虚构角色，而非一个有血有肉的历史人物。此外，近看其中的一张摄影作品——一面白色的砖墙，你会发现酈醒的名字被刻在其中的一块砖上。艺术家本人被刻进这一对于艺术史的表演性呈现之中。在这个模拟展厅的墙壁上，有数件摄影作品表现一个体毛除净、肌肉发达的男子在天鹅绒帘幕与希腊柱构成的背景前站立。在这些人体之中，艺术家本人的自我意识是显而易见的。他们既被展示，又在展示自身。艺术史中的形式（从作品，到展览设施，到博物馆的展览策略）成为戏仿的对象。相仿的探索方式也见于几位与酈醒年龄相仿的艺术家的实践，如藤原赛门（Simon Fujiwara）和帕布罗·布朗斯坦（Pablo Bronstein），都在以类似的方式对博物馆的展示进行戏仿和杂糅。正如布朗斯坦对他运用的巴洛克建筑主题进行的阐释，“巴洛克建筑永远关乎观者的体验”——也就是说，它知道自己在被观看，它毫无羞耻。酈醒的许多近作也充满类似的高度自知。

《列宁在1918》中的某些摄影作品连同其中革命历史年代的符咒再度出现在酈醒新的装置作品《反抗美学》（2015）中。⁴一如他的旧作，艺术、政治与资助的主题相互交织。这件装置作品使人想到一个不在场的艺术家（他可能自杀了，也可能没有）装饰半成的工作室。整件作品如同一个家具零落的工作室，水泥墙壁半涂，滚筒刷被随意弃在一边。在一张木桌上，燃尽的烟头被丢在烟灰缸中，旁边是几张仿造古典雕塑的黑白图片，刺目的灯管悬挂在木桌的上方。几张埃尔·利西茨基（El Lissitzky, 1890—1941）风格的抽象画作被挂成一排，仿佛正被晾干，旁边还有几幅构成主义风格的海报，上面印有“反抗美

学”的字样与弗谢沃洛德·梅耶荷德的姓名。梅耶荷德（Vsevolod Meyerhold, 1874—1940）是一位苏联戏剧导演和演员，曾在成长年代出演契诃夫（Anton Chekhov, 1860—1904）的戏剧。1917年俄国革命爆发，他遂成为革命戏剧的狂热支持者，不久便在莫斯科成立剧场。梅耶荷德是爱森斯坦（Sergei Eisenstein, 1898—1948）与斯坦尼斯拉夫斯基（Konstantin Stanislavsky, 1863—1938）的好友，由于对社会主义现实主义怀着批判的态度，他的前卫戏剧作品在上世纪30年代斯大林的改革和“大清洗”中遭遇极大的压迫。他于1938年被捕，1940年被处决，1955年被平反，那正是斯大林死后苏联“解冻”的初期。

这件作品得名于彼得·魏斯（Peter Weiss, 1916—1982）的三卷本历史小说《反抗美学》（1975—81），该小说全面描绘德国共产党反希特勒活动网络的斗争史。正如詹明信（Fredric Jameson）指出的，这部史诗三部曲“可以说是对德国正史的有力干预……这是一部无产阶级的成长小说，一部底层的教育文本。”⁵魏斯小说第一卷以柏林佩加蒙博物馆（Pergamon Museum）中的场景精彩开篇：“我们的周围满是石头中浮现出的身体，有些聚集成群，缠结交错，有些散落破碎，残存的形状暗示它们曾是一个躯干，一条支撑的手臂，一块破裂的臀部，一枚满是疤痕的碎片，总是摆出作战的姿态，闪避、弹跳、攻击、防御、伸展或蜷曲，有的虽已战死，一条小腿的轮廓，连同一只独自前倾的脚，一个扭曲的背脊，却形成一个完整的动作。”正如我们在酈醒的作品所见，这段文字将展览视作一个注视交织的空间，一种往复之间的教育——观者注视着那些身体，同时也在被注视。

酈醒的作品《反抗美学》是他的展览“贼”的一个组成部分，展览旨在探讨消极性的不同层次和抵抗的不同形式。整个展览如同一次对于胆量和疑虑的类型研究，酈醒构想出一个没有信心以正常方式展览自己作品的艺术家的角色。这些作品应该怎样展示？2015年的作品《羞的故事》（关于一个恋足癖者，一个偷运动袜的贼）是一个极好的例子，其中的一幅照片半藏在墙后，像是怕羞；另一幅不安地立在墙边。这组作品涉及各样的情绪，从羞愧、羞怯，到羞涩、羞耻；同时也关乎力量和恋物，戒律和控制。

酈醒对我说，他2013年以前的作品大多是表演性的，他常常以自己本人的身份在场。⁶然而，他本人渐渐地退出，被各种虚构的艺术家或各样的替身所取代。如酈醒所说，从《列宁在1918》开始“我便不再出现”。他开始喜欢采用虚构的身份，因为这种艺术的迂回可以给他的创作带来挑战。正如他对我的说：“构造一个虚假的故事并不意味着其中的一切都必须都是虚假的。”

the setting would seem to run counter to much American art of the twentieth century, which has often gravitated towards the shadows. As Sarah K. Rich recently wrote, “For the most part, American artists have been denizens of the dark ... for much of the past century the American avant-garde has lurked in places where vitamin D is scarce: the smoky bar and the speakeasy ... midnight piers, Lower East Side squats, and other enjoyably unwholesome spots.”³ In Yan Xing’s series something else is brought to light: these black bodies bear symbolic scars. What is being brought to light here is not only a history of posing in American art, but how bodies on display are irrevocably enmeshed with a reprehensible history of display and objectification. When Yan Xing presented this work, as if to emphasize how these histories of slavery and S&M, patriotism and discrimination, pleasure and pain are imbricated, these photographs were shown near a calfskin whip and a number of camphorwood dildo sculptures, carefully placed on a titanium-coated kick-plinth. These are, presumably, the “other masterpieces” of the title. Even when Yan Xing’s work moves toward darkness, visibility is all.

Lenin in 1918 (2013) concerns the state-sponsored avant-garde. We see a cube-within-a-cube (a format that Yan Xing also made use of in *Modernist, Super-Modernist*, 2012), with a large rectangular aperture cut into one wall. The white cube—the paradigmatic modernist space, which guarantees its “neutrality” by affecting a removal from the outside world—is refashioned as a shop window. (This recalls another piece of Yan Xing’s from 2013, titled *Dirty Art*, which is based on *Drug Store*, Edward Hopper’s 1927 painting of a pharmacy display.) *Lenin in 1918* is, so far as exhibition design goes, a hybrid space: we see plinths from different eras, while a dado runs around the room. Nothing is quite as it seems, or exactly “original”—whatever that might mean in this hall of mirrors. We see a number of all-white versions of easily recognizable works, from Malevich and Brancusi to Cézanne and Matisse.

Each constituent work is carefully listed on museum-style signs, though one of the assembled artists is not all that he seems. Little is known about Theodor Hey, who was an early 20th-century photographer, but Yan Xing appropriated Hey’s name to produce a fictional character, rather than referring to the flesh-and-blood historical figure. Elsewhere, look closely at one of the photographs, which

shows a wall of white bricks, and you notice that Yan Xing’s name has been carved into one of the white bricks. The artist has been literally inscribed into this performative rendering of art history. On the walls of this ersatz gallery space, photographs show a shaved and muscled man set against a backdrop of velvet curtains and Hellenic-styled pillars. The self-awareness of these bodies and works is palpable. They are both on display and “making a display” of themselves. Art history’s forms—from works to exhibition furniture to museum tropes—become travesties. This line of enquiry has affinities to that of several of Yan Xing’s peers, such as Simon Fujiwara and Pablo Bronstein, who likewise pastiche museological displays. As Bronstein has noted of the baroque architectural motifs he deploys, “baroque architecture is always about a viewer experience”—that is, it knows that it is being viewed, it has no shame. A similar hyper-awareness courses through many of Yan Xing’s recent works.

Photographs of certain elements of *Lenin in 1918*, as well as its invocation of historical revolutionary moments, resurface in Yan Xing’s new installation, titled *The Aesthetics of Resistance* (2015).⁴ As with his earlier pieces, it concerns the intertwining of art, politics, and patronage. The installation suggests the partially decorated studio of an absent artist (who may or may not have committed suicide). It comprises a sparsely furnished studio with half-painted concrete walls, a roller-brush casually propped up. On a wooden table, stubbed-out cigarettes are in an ash-tray next to black-and-white prints of faux-classical sculptures, a harsh striplight suspended above. Drawings of some El Lissitzky-esque abstractions are pegged to a line, as though drying, while close by some Constructivist-style posters also hang, emblazoned with “The Aesthetics of Resistance,” along with the name “Vsevolod Meyerhold”. Meyerhold (1874–1940) was a Soviet theater director and actor, who grew up acting in Chekhov plays. With the advent of the Russian Revolution in 1917, he became an enthusiastic advocate of revolutionary theater and founded a theater in Moscow soon after. A close friend of both Sergei Eisenstein and Stanislavsky, Meyerhold was critical of socialist realism and so his avant-garde theatrical works came under intense pressure during Stalin’s reforms and purges of the early 1930s. He was arrested in 1938, and executed in 1940, yet was posthumously cleared of all charges in 1955, during the first years of the post-Stalin thaw.

展览“贼”中满是各样的化身和替身。比如，在16分钟的无声录像《贼》(2015)(也是酈醒的首件彩色录像作品)中，我们与两个人物角色结识：一个衣着考究的贼和一个体操运动员。贼身穿灰色西装，白色衬衫，我们首次遇到他时，他正躲在一个过道的入口。不久，他从西装的兜中掏出一把匕首，鬼鬼祟祟，仿佛在等待什么人。贼不断地扫视街道，并演练一种刺杀的动作。几分钟后，他缓缓地走到镜头前，紧握着匕首。片刻之后，镜头切换到另一个青年男子凝重的面孔。贼退去，体操运动员出现，圆睁双眼，全神贯注。在慢镜头中，他涂上碳酸镁粉的双手轻拍，握紧鞍马。他开始在鞍马上转体，身体几乎水平，与贼的蜷身形成对照。贼神经紧张、咄咄逼人，体操运动员则平静、专注。这两个角色都不是酈醒本人扮演的，两位都是中国人，与酈醒年纪相仿。艺术家本人用这两个角色替代自己意欲何为？这是否意味着艺术家的角色永远无法摆脱劫掠和表演？或者，我们可以改用艺术史的语汇——永远无法摆脱挪用和展览？

在接下来的场景中，贼与一名同伙蹲坐在一起，打开丝绸手绢包裹着的生蚝，用匕首撬开，并将肉喂给他的同伴吃，他的同伴却摇着头，像是感到恶心，将肉吐在自己手中。吐出一团灰白色的物质，其中的色情隐喻不言自明。几段切出镜头——对阳光充沛的原野上的一匹种马(可以说是作品中的第三位主角)的拍摄与特写，使这种性感的解读强化并复杂化。鞍马变身为一匹有血有肉的动物。我们先是看到它筋骨强健的腿，然后是长长的阳具。如果说体操运动员和贼的形象暗示着艺术家的角色同样关乎偷窃、欺骗、努力，对马的引入则暗示着精力和欲望从未远离。

脖颈的搏动是《贼》中的一个反复出现的意象，呼应着另一件装置作品《筋》(2015)中的一幅摄影。这组黑白摄影中有一幅表现一个男子捂住自己的嘴——由于羞耻，还是由于痛苦？我们不得而知。还有一幅摄影向我们呈现这个男子赤裸的躯体，在另一幅中，他的口里塞着一只白手绢。这些摄影作品与一件地面作品共同展示——由铜块，或水泥和黑砂制成的地砖片，使人不免想起卡尔·安德烈在20世纪60年代开始制作的作品(正如旁边照片中黑人男子的姿态使人想起梅普勒索普以及酈醒2013年的作品《两部录像，三张照片，几件与之相关的杰作和美国艺术》中对于梅普勒索普的引用)。这些地砖片表面散布着一些拾来之物与丝制品——这又是一个与《贼》和其中主角的手绢相联的线索。然而，并非所有的关联都来自美国艺术家：《筋》中的一个组成部分是酈醒母亲的一幅小照片，她曾经是一位服装设计师，对于年少时的酈醒有过极深的影响。展览的另外一个组成部分《贼》(铜)不在展厅之中，而是不太显眼地挂在画廊建筑外立面的砖墙上。三块铜板刻有展览的中文标题，以仿宋字体——一种标准化的中文字体匿名镌刻。它们显明展

览的标题，却藏身于低调的呈现。⁷无疑，我们身陷关联、映像与姿态的复杂迷宫之中。

贼与体操运动员。一个职业关乎潜伏与能见度，另一个关乎勇猛与肉体性，贼必须藏在阴影中，运动员却在聚光灯下。艺术家更像哪一个？暗与光，藏匿与展示——正是这样的辩证关系使酈醒迷人的炫示变幻万千。

翻译：戴章伦

¹ Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics*, 2002。

² Craig Owens, "Representation, Appropriation, and Power", *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power and Culture*, 1994。

³ Sarah K. Rich, "Brought to Light", *Artforum*, 2015年9月, 第350页。

⁴ 酈醒告诉我这件作品的标题在中文中有着歧义，“反抗”既可以是形容词，又可以是动词。

⁵ 詹明信，《反抗美学》前言。

⁶ 与酈醒的Skype对话，2015年9月25日。

⁷ 这件装置作品令人想到酈醒的旧作《跋》(2013)，一件安装在展厅外面的录像作品，将英国艺术家理查德·汉密尔顿(Richard Hamilton)影响深远的波普拼贴作品《是什么使今天的家庭如此非凡，如此有魅力？》(*Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?*, 1956)的标题逐个单词滚动循环播放。

The work takes its title, *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, from Peter Weiss's three-volume historical novel (1975–81), which charts the struggles of the German Communist anti-Hitler networks. As Fredric Jameson has remarked, this epic trilogy “marks a powerful intervention in German historiography ... this is a proletarian *Bildungsroman*, a pedagogy of the subaltern.”⁵ Weiss's first volume opens in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, with this remarkable sentence: “All around us the bodies rose out of the stone, crowded into groups, intertwined, or shattered into fragments, hinting at their shapes with a torso, a propped-up arm, a burst hip, a scabbed shard, always in warlike gestures, dodging, rebounding, attacking, shielding themselves, stretched high or crooked, some of them snuffed out, but with a freestanding, forward-pushing foot, a twisted back, the contour of a calf harnessed into a single common motion.” As with Yan Xing's work, this passage establishes the exhibition as a space of crisscrossing gazes, a taut back-and-forth between spectators looking at bodies while they, in turn, are also observed.

Yan Xing's work, *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, was presented as part of his exhibition *Thief*, which explored the different senses of negativity and different forms of resistance. The show was a study of sorts in both boldness and hesitancy, in the sense that Yan Xing envisioned an artist who lacked the confidence to exhibit his work in the normal way. How might these works be displayed? To take a striking example, one photograph in *The Story of Shame* (2015)—which concerns a foot fetishist and stocking thief—is partially hidden behind a wall, as though shame-faced; another is anxiously propped up. The work concerns a range of emotions, from humiliation and cowardice, to shyness and disgrace. It is about force and fetishism, discipline and domination.

Yan Xing remarked to me that, before 2013, his work was largely performative and he was himself almost always present.⁶ However, he has slowly receded, being replaced by various fictional artists or stand-ins. As Yan Xing suggested, starting with *Lenin in 1918*, “there was no more *me*.” He has come to prefer adopting fictional identities because of the challenge that this artful subterfuge creates for his practice. As he said to me, “To build a fake story doesn't mean that everything has to be fake.”

Thief was populated with a number of different avatars or proxies. For example, in the sixteen-minute silent film *Thief* (2015), Yan Xing's first-ever color video, we are introduced to two characters: a sharply dressed thief and a gymnast. The thief wears a gray suit and white shirt, and we first encounter him hiding in an entrance to an alley. After a moment, he produces a small knife from his suit pocket. Looking furtive, he seems to be waiting for somebody; the thief continually scans the street, while rehearsing a stabbing gesture. After several minutes, he moves slowly toward the camera, clutching the knife. A moment later, the film cuts to the intense-looking face of another young man. We have moved from the thief to the gymnast, who glowers with concentration. In slow-motion, his hands clap magnesium carbonate powder and grip a pommel horse. He starts to spin around the wooden horse, his body almost horizontal, a counterpoint to the thief's hunched pose. Where the thief is jittery, aggressive, and poised to attack, the gymnast is calm and focused. While neither of these men are played by Yan Xing himself, they are Chinese and around his age. What might it mean for the artist to be replaced by these two figures? Is there a suggestion here that the figure of the artist is always inextricably involved with robbery and with performance? Or—to put it another way, in art-historical terms—with appropriation and exhibition?

In a later sequence, the thief and an accomplice are squatting down. First cradling an oyster in a silk napkin, he shucks it with a knife and feeds it to his companion, who—shaking his head in disgust—spits it out into his hand. The erotic implication of spitting out this grey-white substance is clear. This sexual reading is emphasized and complicated by several cutaway shots of an actual horse, a third protagonist of sorts, closely cropped and filmed in a sunny field. The pommel horse has morphed into a flesh-and-blood animal. First we see its sinewy legs, then later its long penis. If the figures of the gymnast and thief suggest that the figure of the artist is also involved with stealing, deception, and exertion, the introduction of the horse suggests that virility and desire are never very far away.

A recurrent gesture in the film *Thief* is the stroking of the neck. This echoes a photograph that constitutes part of the neighboring installation, *Tendon* (2015). Another of these black-and-white

images shows a man with his hand to his mouth—whether in ignominy or anguish, it is difficult to say. In another photograph, we see the man’s naked torso; in another, his mouth is stuffed with a white silk handkerchief. These are shown alongside a tiled floor piece made of copper, or concrete and black silica sand, which inevitably recalls the works that Carl Andre began to produce in the early 1960s (just as the poses of the black men in the accompanying photographs refer to both Mapplethorpe and to Yan Xing’s own Mapplethorpe-quoting *Two Videos, Three Photographs, Several Related Masterpieces, and American Art*, 2013). Placed on top of these tiles are various found objects and silk products, another strand connecting them to *Thief*, and the handkerchief of that video’s protagonist. However, not all of the references are to American artists: one element of *Tendon* is a small photograph of Yan Xing’s mother, a fashion designer who was a considerable influence on the young artist. Other elements of the work, titled *Thief* (Copper), are found—not in the gallery, but hung unobtrusively on the building’s brick facade. These three copper plaques are etched with the title in Chinese, rendered in FangSong, one of the standard typefaces of simplified Chinese. They proclaim the title of the exhibition while hiding in plain sight.⁷ We are, it is clear, in a complex labyrinth of references, reflections, and poses.

A thief and a gymnast. One profession concerns furtiveness and visibility, the other physical prowess and physicality; while the thief sticks to the shadows, the acrobat is under the spotlight. Where does the artist fit in? Darkness and light, the hidden and the displayed—this is the dialectic that inflects all of Yan Xing’s seductive exhibitionism.

¹ Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (2002).

² Craig Owens, “Representation, Appropriation, and Power,” in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power and Culture* (1994).

³ Sarah K. Rich, “Brought to Light,” *Artforum* (September 2015), p. 350.

⁴ Yan Xing remarked to me that the work’s Chinese title carries an ambiguity, in that it could mean either “the aesthetics of resistance” or “resisting aesthetics.”

⁵ Fredric Jameson, foreword to *The Aesthetics of Resistance*.

⁶ Skype conversation with Yan Xing, September 25, 2015.

⁷ This installation recalls Yan Xing’s earlier work, *Epilogue* (2013), a video mounted outside the gallery, scrolling through—character by individual character—the title of the British artist Richard Hamilton’s seminal Pop collage, *Just What is it That Makes Today’s Homes so Different, so Appealing?* (1956).