

Liang-Hsuan Chen & Musquiqui Chihying

The Gesture II

Installation, HD video, live performance

Mixed media

“Taoist philosophy and demonstration of its ritual and rites”/

Interviewee: Grand Master Ching-Lung Lin

Interview proofreading: Yen-Mei Lin

“Taoist magic arts in movies and talisman”/

Interviewee: Taoist Master Sanlong Yu-Chih Chang

Executive coordinator: Zi-Yin Chen

Filming: Anpis Wang

Recording: Cheng-Liang Li

Assistant interviewer: Hsiang-Feng Chuang

Proofreading: Li-Siou Wang

English translation: Kimberly Lee

Live performance/

Action design: Ying-Kai Wang

Sound design: Yi-Ta Hsu

Execution: I-Yeh Wu

Dimensions variable

2020

Special Thanks: Simple Noodle Art

Performance Times

2020/9/6 (Sat.) 11:00

2020/9/13 (Sat.) 11:00

2020/9/20 (Sat.) 11:00

2020/9/27 (Sat.) 11:00

With the advent of the novel coronavirus epidemic over the past six months, not only have masks become a crucial first line of defense, but also hand gestures. To avoid contracting the virus, the government has counseled us to frequently wash and rub our hands, to constantly disinfect with alcohol, and to even wear rubber gloves. A new set of gestures have become the daily bodily rituals of the entire populace. These gestures draw a boundary, along which each individual delineates the internal/safe from the external/dangerous. But it is not just at this point in time that hand gestures have served as protective barriers – this is a culture that has always existed among humankind. “The Gesture II” begins with pop culture, exploring the zombie movies popular in Hong Kong and Taiwan during the 1990s and pondering how certain symbols in these films such as gestures or amulets metaphorically represented and reflected the public’s anxieties and fears and transformed them into comedy. Zombie movies are filled with visual elements, and these images are internalized and absorbed back into the public’s thinking. Unlike similar films of the West, in which zombies meet with direct bodily resistance, it is with protective hand gestures and ritualistic implements that different local cultures express a special sense of distance and deal with anxiety and danger. To this day, even with our endless string of crises, people still use symbolic hand gestures to respond to concerns about reality.

The Gesture II: Gestures

The single-channel short film “The Gesture II: Gestures” documents nine hand gestures that have arisen due to the epidemic, becoming the “Nine Protective Gestures” of the present day.

The Gesture II: Talk

The double-channel film “The Gesture II: Talk” presents interviews with two Taoist priests: Master Lin Ching-lung, a ceremonial authority, and Master Sanlong, who excels in crafting amulets. Through their respective professional viewpoints, the work dissects the elements in mass culture and pop-culture imagery to understand the connections between Taoist arts and contemporary life. In the film Master Lin Ching-lung performs a blessing ritual to protect us against the pandemic, hoping these images will have the effect of fighting plague, warding off evil and soothing our spirits. Though the arrival of each new crisis batters us body and soul and the political and economic environment grows ever more turbulent, these masters of spiritual art may be able to access their ancient mystical tradition to tap out a visual narrative for the new era, echoing through the exhibition space.

The Gesture II: The Writing

In this installation three automatic writing machines in the gallery constantly compose lucky charms on behalf of visitors: “Ward Off Illness,” “Purify and Remove Pestilence” and “Protect and Bring Peace.” These three charms were created by Master Sanlong specially for this work, treating the crisis and anxiety of current times. Each has their own application: “Ward Off Illness” is a charm to fight against viruses and eliminate diseases. “Purify and Remove Pestilence” is interpreted as being able to cleanse or prevent mechanical failure. “Protect and Bring Peace” is meant to make the body healthy and reduce illness caused by disease.

The Gesture II: The Ritual

During the exhibition period, this project will feature four exploratory rituals or live bodily performances, focusing on “how to resist new fears” and “how to lay down protective boundaries” – forging a connection with current social anxieties caused by the epidemic, and attempting to rethink the meaning of ritual in the age of digital networks. “The Ritual” is an extension of the investigations of Taoist arts in the video work. Working in collaboration with Wang Ying-Kai, an expert in operatic performance, the artist has designed a series of rituals addressing the crisis and reinterpreting the symbolic meaning of “resistance” and “protection.”