

Time after Time:
On the Art of Chang Chao-tang
歲月歷歷：
論張照堂的藝術

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專題 當代影像的感覺結構：集置、編排與系列性

Abstract

If photography is the art of fixing shadow as a trace of time, Chang Chao-tang's art is showing invisible trace of strange temporality of our modernity. Time here is not something common to us as usual meaning of everyday life. Chang Chao-tang shows us another time, the time hidden to us, the time alienated in our modern society, the time that we cannot regard as promised one. The art of Chang Chao-tang is an everlasting effort to make visible the entanglement of things, our bodily engagement with post-capitalist society in the circumstance of the most humble, unknown neighbors where fear and hope melted into one. I believe that our "artist of all time" continue to show that the time is still there on our side worth living with, worth battling with, worth sharing with even in the hardest time of humanity.

Keywords: time, body, entanglement, animal, chance

摘要

如果攝影即是將歲月痕跡定影的藝術，張照堂的藝術便是在展現我們現代性那奇異時間性的不可見痕跡。在此，時間並不是日常生活普通意義下共通於我們之間的某種事物。張照堂向我們揭示了另一種時間，對我們隱而不見的歲月，在我們現代社會中已疏離的歲月，我們無法將這種歲月視為理所當然的時間。張照堂的藝術，即是永不止息，努力讓事物間的糾葛、吾人身體與後資本主義社會間的連帶，變得可見，其所處環境十分鄰近、匯聚著恐懼與希望，卻至為卑微、無人聞問。我相信我們的「全時間藝術家」持續在展現，即使在人性最艱難的時刻，歲月仍在我們的周遭，值得與之共活，值得為之戰鬥，值得彼此共享。

關鍵字：歲月、身體、糾葛、動物、機遇

When do artists work? Day and night, even in bed. Saint-Pol-Roux, before going to bed in the early morning, used to put up a notice on his door—"Poet at work."¹ After visiting the great show in Taipei Art Museum, and his three private shows in three galleries in Tokyo, I believe that Chang Chao-tang is at work all the time.² This immense corpus of works made through his half a century activity invites us to his realm of images, which is already a part of history of modern photography. "A part of history," I mean some of his works are enough famous to recognize, but we do not know the image entirely. There is something in his picture we miss to notice then we discover that detail in the second time to look at. It was a rare opportunity for me that I could appreciate many of his pictures in its detail in the intimate space of private galleries in Tokyo, after looking at the ensemble of his art in the museum in Taipei. Now to me it is obvious that Chang Chao-tang is not only an excellent photographer. He is a kind of artists who could appear only one or two in every countries.

Bodily Engagement

What is amazing with his art, is his maturity at its very early stage. Hiromi Tsuchida, one of representative photographer in Japan, is one of those share this feeling. In the opening night at Gallery Tosei, he said that the high school year's works look already that of adult's. It is not because the main subject is children but the stability and consistency of the vision is already there. The theme as well. Street life, strange figures, sense of solitude. How was it possible? No one can answer but himself to the question and it should be secret forever. As once Diane Arbus told, art of photography is the secret of secrets. Who knows his first camera contained a magical creature? Anyway from that time on, the camera has been always in his hand and in his mind to reveal the secret of world. I think he has several keys to get through the door, in order to unlock the hidden dimension. Body, Things and Chance are some of them.

From the series of male nude to his recent works in color, human body is in his

1 In the writing by Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts, Signs*, ed. Ursula Marx, Gudrun Schwartz, Michael Schwartz, and Erdmut Wizisla; trans. Esther Leslie (London: VERSO, 2007), p. 65.

2 Three private solo shows were held in Zen Gallery, Gallery Tosei, Place M in April 2014.

central interest. It is often represented an extreme of existence, or limit of life. Many critics have correctly pointed out that headless figure and bodiless head are ominipresent in his works. It should be a sign of revolt against oppressive atmosphere under martial law period as artist himself recalls but when we look at these headless figures together with his later portrait works, we understand that it was not his sign of revolt but the one of the society itself. His interest and knowledge in the people at the marge of society, almost disappearing type of custom—arts, songs, rituals—that he documented in depth are also the signs of agony in modern Taiwanese culture. Thus I would say that body depicted by Chang Chao-tang is a social engagement of its time. Probably it was not the photographer who discovered the engagement but those bodies revealed it though the objective lens. Two bodies meet at its limits.

Entanglement of Things

I stayed immobile like stone in front a picture in the museum. On the table a monkey manipulating two batons, one in his hands and the other on his mouth. His master, a young guy grasping the arm of monkey looks straight to the camera with the third baton on the table. The monkey as well... then suddenly all the things around began looking at me... a crocodile under the monkey (but why there is crocodile there?), a strange portrait behind the monkey, even a spread skin of a mountain cat looks have its eyes on me. It was taken in Wanhua in 1976 (in the catalogue, 2013: 187)³.

Surely I was mesmerized by its very strange component of the image. Those things have nothing in common among each other- no internal relation neither historical connection could be recognized between the monkey, the crocodile, the bizarre portrait, the animal skin, and a Taoist statue at the edge of picture, but still they all have such a strong gaze pointed to the spectator.

If Chang Cha-tang's picture reminds us those works in surrealist oeuvres, this is one of the example. But I think in his picture there is something more than the beauty "as the

3 In this exhibition catalogue *Time: the Images of Chang Chao-Tang, 1959-2013* (Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2013).

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chance meeting on a dissecting-table of a sewing-machine and an umbrella.” These things in the street corner of Wanhua are not depicted for a poetic expression but they are there on their own right, with their own reason and their fullness of existence. Though their rights, reasons and energy are never explained and will be never known in the marge of dominant economy, the picture shows there are something between them, a subtle link among these things on the day when the photographer passed by, on that exact time and moment.

The genie of photography is to put things on a line, then reveal a kind of entanglement of object world around. For me, the clue of the invisible link is the three batons. That is the oldest object of Human against the Nature, the source of power and politics of all time. Like in the circus and as always out it the baton orders and makes the equilibrium among things and interests. And before leaving the picture, I suddenly understood that there is a fourth baton, the ultimate one that remains invisible. It was his camera that created this almost miraculous equilibrium. What he shows is not only these things but the trace of things. On the table, there is a strange stain, that suggests the crocodile might be alive... and all that we see here is a trace of evolutionary time, from reptile to human via mountain cat and monkey. Darwin in Wanhua or a theater of anti-evolution.

Chance and Hope

The gallery Place M near Shinjuku gives always new and wide range of works. The recent series “Sleepwalking Before...” and “Taiwan-and then Nuclear Disaster” were shown there. In the museum I saw these two works as an experimental yet incomplete one but when we look every picture at a close distance, the impression was different. The selection of the images are clear, always on the line of his keen interest on social body and strangeness. For Japanese audience, “Nuclear Disaster” was especially important one under the actual situation. I find the works using the old negative, printed with very different light and shadow are very interesting in regard of the question of “the time of photography.” Like our memory, the time of photography is not only inside of the photographic medium, but it is embodied in the relational link, or entanglement of

images and life of our “now.”

In fact these two series prove that the artist’s vision is still at its best, even more radical than his youth. But how is it possible?

I will not give any answer to the question. If there are any, they should be found in his works. But it is sure that there is something unusual. I would say that his walk to encounter such circumstances, his tactics to find an exact distance with subjects, his ability to stay silent in the mid of moving space.

At the beginning of the catalogue the author writes that there are so many titles in his essays with the word “time”. Time passes by, the battle of time, time’s hair loss, time upside down.... The title of his retrospective is naturally that word, but I think it is not really “looking back his time” type of time. The time here is not something common to us as usual meaning of everyday life. Chang Chao-tang shows us another time, the time hidden to us, the time alienated in our modern society, the time that we cannot regard as promised one. The art of Chang Chao-tang is a never ending effort to make visible that time in the most humble, unknown next in our city of glorious misery and miserable glory. I believe that the artist of all the time continue to show that the time is still there and worth to live with, worth to battle with, worth to share with, even when we say we have no more time.

藝術家在什麼時間工作？日日夜夜，甚至在寤寐就寢時。聖波勒胡（Saint-Pol-Roux）在清晨上床時，習慣在他的門上掛上告示：「詩人工作中。」我在臺北市立美術館看了大型回顧展，以及在東京三個畫廊的三個個展後，深信張照堂無時無刻不在工作。如此大量的作品，穿越過他半世紀的活動，引領我們進入他的影像天地，一個已經成為現代攝影史一部分的天地。我所謂的「攝影史的一部分」，意謂他的作品已經赫赫有名，但我們卻無法窺見其全貌。他的照片中，我們總是錯失了某些東西，然後，等到第二次注視時，又發現一些細節。在臺北市立美術館觀賞過他的藝術全貌之後，我很幸運有機會能像在東京畫廊的近密空間裡，貼身細看他的許多作品。如今，我十分確信，張照堂不只是一位優秀的攝影家而已，他其實是每個世紀只會出現一兩位的那種藝術家。

身體連帶

他的藝術有著令人訝異的早熟。日本攝影家中的代表之一土田宏美（Hiromi Tsuchida），也具有這樣的特質。「冬青社藝廊」個展開幕之夜時，他說他在中學時期的作品，就已經有了成人的模樣。並不是因為主題集中在小孩，而是視覺上的穩定性與一貫性已然建立。主題方面亦然。街井生活，怪異形體，孤寂感。這是怎麼辦到的？這個問題除了他自己，沒有人能回答，而答案應該永遠會是個謎。就像黛安·阿勃絲（Diane Arbus）曾經說過的，攝影藝術其實是秘密中的秘密。誰知道他的第一具相機裡是不是有一隻神靈奇獸？無論如何，從那時起，相機就不離他的手、他的心，揭開世界的奧秘。我認為他有許多把穿越門廊的鑰匙，開啟隱藏的向度。身體、事物與機遇乃其中數例。

從男性裸體系列到他近期的彩色作品，人體是他的核心興趣。這方面呈現的經常是存在的極端、生命的極限狀態。許多評論者曾正確地指出，無頭形體與無身之頭遍存於他的作品中。這應該是藝術家本身回憶中對於戒嚴時期高壓氣氛的一種反抗符號，不過，當我們將這些無頭形體與其後來的自拍像並置來看，我們會了解，這並不是他的反抗符號，而是社會本身的符號。他對於社會邊緣人的知識和興趣，對那些幾近消失的風俗類型——藝術、歌曲、儀式——的深度紀錄，其實也是現代臺灣社會的傷痛符號。因此，我會說張照堂所刻畫的身體，是當時的一種社會連帶。或許並不是攝影家自己發現了這種連帶，而是那些身體透過客觀的鏡頭揭露了這樣的連帶。

事物糾葛

美術館中，我站在一張相片前，凝結如石。一張桌子上，一隻猴子在玩兩根棍棒，一根在牠高舉的雙手中，另一根在牠上唇鼻間頂著。牠的主人是個年輕男子，右手抓住猴子的左手臂，直視著相機，第三根棍子擺在桌面上，猴子也直視著相機……剎那間，所有周圍的事物開始凝視著我……猴子胯下的鱷魚（但為什麼會出現一隻鱷魚呢？），猴子後面上方的一張奇怪的肖像，甚至一張展開的山貓皮，看起來都擁有了盯著我的眼睛。這是一張1976年攝於萬華的相片。（展覽圖錄187頁）

我徹頭徹尾沈醉於影像的怪異組成份本身。那些事物，彼此間沒有任何的共通之處，猴子、鱷魚、怪肖像、獸毛皮，影像右側邊還有一尊彌勒佛像，既沒有內在關係，也沒有歷史關聯，然而，它們卻仍然具有某種強大的凝視，射向觀看者。

如果張照堂的影像讓我們想起那些超現實主義的作品，這是其中一個例子。但是，我認為在他的影像中，有某種東西超過了「縫紉機與雨傘在解剖台上的偶然相遇」那樣的美。這些在萬華街角的事物，並非為了詩意的表達而描繪，而是它們各憑本事存在那兒，有其自身的理由，亦有其存在的充實感。雖然它們的本領、理由與能量從未加以解釋，在主流經濟的邊緣，也永遠不會被知曉，但是這個影像顯示，在攝影家經過的時候，它們之間有某種東西，這些事物之間有某種微妙的聯結，就在那個時刻、那個瞬間。

攝影的精妙處，在於將事物並置一處，卻揭示出周遭客觀世界的某種糾葛。對我而言，隱形的聯結線索，就是那三根棍棒。那是人類反抗自然的最古老物件，力量的來源，是穿越時代的政治。就像在馬戲團裡，以及在它之外，棒子指揮、創造著事物與利益間的平衡。在離開那張相片之前，我突然了解還有第四根棒子，最後一根，持續不可見。那便是張照堂的相機，創造了這個幾近奇蹟似的平衡感的相機。他所展示的不只是這些事物，而是事物的痕跡。在桌面上，有一灘奇怪的污漬，暗示著鱷魚可能是活的……而我們在此所見，是演化的痕跡，從爬蟲類到人類，中間通過山貓與猿猴階段。達爾文在萬華，或是一個反演化劇場。

機遇與希望

新宿附近的「M Place畫廊」總是展出新穎多樣的作品，最近展出的系列是「夢遊—遠行之前…」、「臺灣—核災之後…」。我在北美館看過這兩個系列的作品，屬於實驗的未完成狀態，但是，當我們貼近細看每一張相片，印象會有所不同。影像的選擇十分清晰，一貫沿著他最擅長的社會身體與怪異感這條路線。對日本觀眾來說，「臺灣—核災之後…」在現實的情境下，成為特別重要的系列。若以「攝影的時間」這樣的問題眼光來看，我發現這些作品運用了老的負片，以十分不同的光影印出，顯得非常有趣。就像我們的記憶，攝影的時間不僅內在於攝影的媒介上，也體現在關係的聯結、影像與我們「當下」生命之間的糾葛。

事實上，這兩組系列證明了藝術家的眼光仍然處於最優狀態，甚至比他年輕時更為激進。但是，這如何可能呢？

我不會為這個問題提出任何解答。如果有任何答案，都應該在他的作品裡找出來。但顯然有某種不尋常的事態。我會說的是，他的散步，使他邂逅那般多樣的環境，他的戰術，讓他發現與主體的確切距離，他的能耐，教他在運動著的空間之中保持沈默。

在攝影集的一開始，作者寫道，關於他的論文，有許多的標題都跟「歲月」這個詞有關。歲月路過、歲月對陣、歲月落髮、歲月逆轉……他的回顧展標題，自然便用了那個字眼，但是，我認為這個標題並不真的意味「回顧他的時代」的那種歲月。這裡的歲月，並不是某種我們以為日常生活中一般意義的同事態。張照堂展示給我們的是另一種時間，是對我們隱而不見的時光，與我們的現代社會疏離的歲月，這種歲月，我們不能視之為已經允諾可及的歲月。張照堂的藝術，正是無止無盡的努力，要讓這種歲月，以最為謙卑的方式變為可見，這種歲月，在我們浮華可悲與可悲浮華的城市邊緣，無人聞問。我相信，這位全時間的藝術家持續不懈地在顯示這種歲月仍然存在，仍然值得我們與之共活，值得為之戰鬥，值得與其同命共享，即便我們說，我們沒有時間、歲月不再。