The Power of Doubt

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Art is an imaginative, but equally realistic, way to approach and question the world. Creating an artwork, while mobilising all our faculties of imagination is, to a great extent, a process of creatively and critically demonstrating how we perceive reality by means of 'representation' in images, texts and other media. It inevitably involves doubts, questioning, investigation and interrogation regarding the real world, which, in turn, is permanently changing. By definition, an artwork in general results from doubting the real—not only the appearance of reality but also, more importantly, the substance of its existence, or, the truth. This is a process full of contradictions, an infinite adventure into the realm of the impossible since truth is by no mean unique and certain. Instead, it's always unstable, uncertain and multiple.

The invention of photography also implies a contradiction: it was devised to be the most immediate and loyal reflection of the real world, hence its reality, or truth. At the same time, however, it immediately raises the question of the reliability of the real-ness of the images that it reproduces, due to the variable factors involved in the process, the material and technical limits of the equipment, the environmental conditions, and so on. Hence, photography shows the reality of the world in images that are shockingly different from our retinal perception, while the intervention of the subjective approach of the photographer can radically complicate and alter the 'representative' nature of the image. The representational function of photography thus becomes an eternal problem. Instead of solving the problem in any finite way, it continuously sheds light (and casts a shadow) on the very tension between the necessity of questioning the real world and its relationship with our existence, and the impossibility of

answering the question. There are infinite doubts here. In our time, moving images on various material supports such as film and video, as well as computer-generated images, are introduced to substitute for conventional photography. Art production in general is also a process of producing our own impression, perception and conception of reality itself. Therefore, through what Arjun Appadurai might call the work of imagination, they are producing a world or, more precisely, different worlds, to our life, and these are becoming more real than the material one that is out there. The expressive power of the image depends on how much it can evoke our doubts *vis-à-vis* the real. It incarnates the power of doubt as the core of our reflection on the truth. It is this power of doubt that renders photography and, by extension, multimedia, the very substance of being a form of art. It is that which perfectly embodies the intervention of modernity in making our reality for the last centuries and continues to impact on the making of today's contemporaneity.

Our era is the one determined and shaped by digital technologies. Our existences and identities are continually transformed and redefined by interfaces in the form of flux of digitalised information: images and texts. These interfaces oscillate between facts and fictions. They constitute the contemporary substance of reality and truth. But they are, inevitably, fantastic and hallucinatory.

Art and artists today, like the world itself, are largely 'globalised'. Digital media, from still and moving images to the internet, are both the resources and materials for artistic production. Artists continue to confront, embrace, investigate and interrogate the nature of reality, truth and dreams. But the processes are unprecedentedly fluid, uncertain and precarious, while the outcomes are generating more suspense, doubts and critiques than conclusions or resolutions. The power of their thoughts and expressions lies precisely in this path of doubt.

This is particularly articulated in some specific contexts: locations that are experiencing heavier social transformations than other parts of the world, namely, societies forced to negotiate with transitions from a historically traumatised condition, a seemingly open and liberated globalised world.

A world that violently imposes fictions of happiness and peace by flattening reality into an interface that compresses every human activity into an act of communicating a single truth. Behind the 'freedom' of expression and communication provided by Google, Facebook and iPhone, and so on, in the field of economy we have only one option: to survive in a liberal capitalist system. In the meantime, politically, we are expected to embrace the hegemony of one kind of 'democracy' dictated by the logic of global imperialism. Individuals, collectives and societies are increasingly reduced to instruments serving the realisation of this hegemony while, ironically, we are 'informed' that we have gained much more freedom than ever before. Here lies the fundamental paradox of our time. This tension is particularly visible among, and drastically expressed by, those who have been striving to emancipate themselves from the older traumas of colonialism, communism and 'backwardness', and who are now facing the challenge of viable emancipations from the globalised world of liberal capitalism and neoimperialism. Artists, as the most sensitive and imaginative individuals, continue to lead the struggle for such emancipation, not unlike during the 'underground avant-garde' years through the Cold War and anti-colonial era. They should perfectly incarnate the power of doubt.

'The Power of Doubt' superimposes site-specific installations and works in various new and old media and is somehow rooted in photography as a model of perception.[1] These works embody the necessity of doubting the 'mainstream' way of seeing, recording and communicating the real world, which, again, oscillates between spectacular 'truths' and dramatic fictions. Most of the artists are from regions like China or Eastern Europe that have experienced drastic changes from communism to capitalism, or South Asia or Africa, where people continue to negotiate possibilities of life between colonial legacy and present geopolitical conflicts while searching for solutions with which to deconstruct the double-bind *status quo*, blocked by postcolonial and neoliberal systems. With diverse interests in artistic and intellectual pursuits, the artists give voice to the collective doubts and desires of their

societies. They are more or less directly responding to some of the most urgent issues influencing our common life today and 'haunting' our obsessive pursuit of truth.

We are living in a time of global wars — a state of exception that replaces normal existence and is perpetuated by the power of the Global Empire, as pointed out by scholars like Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt. In our everyday life and imaginary, we are living with and, often, within, the state of war. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as in Chechnya and Somalia, are regular headlines in newspapers, while other regional and international conflicts such as those between Palestine and Israel, India and Pakistan and so on, are marking our daily conversations. At the same time, memories of past wars in Vietnam and Lebanon, among others, still haunt our consciousness and nightmares. They inescapably constitute a crucial part of the issues examined by contemporary artists, especially those whose personal experiences are intimately related to such events.

Shaun Gladwell from Australia, an ally of the United States that has sent its soldiers to 'maintain' peace in Afghanistan, visited 'Camp Holland', a military base near Tarin Kowt, a southern Afghan town that has been purportedly omitted on Google Maps. He invited a couple of soldiers to perform a piece with video cameras, filming each other against the setting of the quasi-invisible military camp. Instead of showing the violent aspects of the war, the artist chooses to expose a more subtle, but somehow more brutal side of it. Seeing his work as way of leaking the official secret of the location and the human activities carried out there, he attempts to demonstrate the possibility of dealing with the limbo of the war.[2] In the current climate, one can easily relate this work with the heroic actions of Wikileaks, a website founded by one of Gladwell's 'compatriots', Australian Julian Assange. More interestingly, Gladwell, inspired by Dan Graham's famous experiments in *Helix/Spiral* (1973), with video cameras merging with the bodies as tools for exploring the relationship between perception, body and public space, intelligently set up a double-channel video installation, which formed a total environment where the spectator experiences
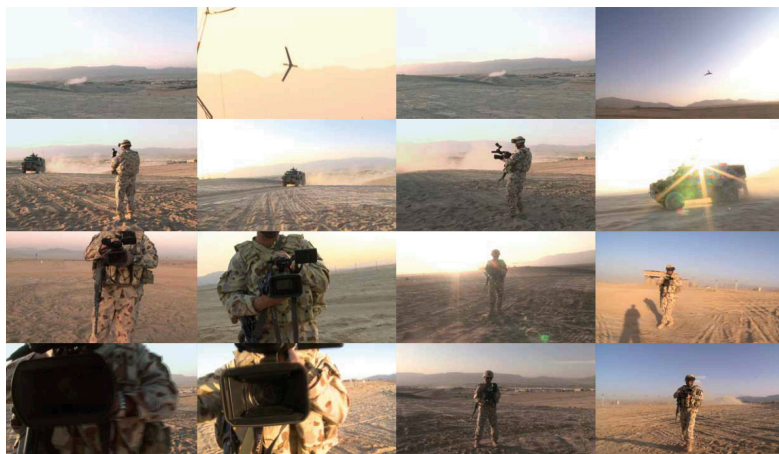
3   Shaun Gladwell
     Double Field/Viewfinder (Tarin Kowt), 2009-10

a strong sense of participation in the situation. (Figure 3) This war is not something happening 'out there'. It takes place here, where we are standing.

Dihn Q Lê, a Vietnamese artist who fled his country at the age of eight at the end of the Vietnam War, grew up in California and returned to Ho Chi Mihn City in the late 1990s. He has been obsessively exploring the memory of the war and its impacts on contemporary life ever since. For him, the painful memory is not simply personal: it is a common source for several generations' imagination. Ironically, this collective memory of a difficult historical period, which still exerts considerable influence on today's society, has become an imaginative and economic resource for the mainstream media—including the Hollywood film industry—to impose certain ideological and political conceptions of verity, namely propaganda on behalf of the superpower. Multiple images of the 'reality', or 'truths', of the war experiences, are superimposed, fused and confused. How to go about exposing and resisting such a perverse exploration of pain and memory has become the central concern in his artistic and ethical struggle. Doubting and challenging the Hollywood-style 'truth' has hence become his preoccupation. In his photo-collage series 'From Vietnam to Hollywood', he demonstrates the entangling and intriguing limbo of memory, weaving real and fictional images together. In his more recent animation video *South China Sea Pishkun*, Lê turns his interpretation of the tragic crashes of the last American helicopters retreating from Vietnam into satirically amplified performances, in a reference to *pishkun*, a Native American tradition of handling animals.

Shaun Gladwell's and Dinh Q Lê's half-critical and half-playful reappropriations of war experiences are echoed in Shahzia Sikander's film *Bending the Barrels* (2009). Originally from Pakistan and now living in New York, the artist has created complex but poetic works ranging from painting through calligraphy to video to explore the tension between cultural hybridity and geopolitical conflicts as the driving force in the formation of a nation's imaginary and self-identification. In *Bending the Barrels*, she revisits the history and current situation of her country, prompted by the instability, uncertainty

and violence of its struggle for independence and democracy. It is an endless negotiation, or power bargain, between politicians and the military, while the voices of civil society has been largely silenced. Documenting the pageantry of military marching band in a mixture of colonial and traditional styles along with authoritative military pronouncements, the artist's aim is to reflect on 'the paradox of authority' and demonstrate 'a sense of uneasiness and pending crisis'.[3]

Contemporary geopolitical conflicts such as warfare in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan and the confrontations between the global imperialist power and the rebellions of civil society in different localities (such as the current civil uprisings in Arab countries against their authoritarian leaderships, who are supported by the West) are intrinsically rooted in the unsolved heritage of postcolonial struggles across the globe. The globalisation of media culture—with the intervention of media powers such as CNN live news broadcasts and Hollywood-style clichés and iconography—intensifies this conflictive process, while substituting the factual reality with propagandist imagery. This further raises questions and suspicions about the truth of history, especially its real nature, and of the transition from colonial past to contemporary globalisation and its impact on our perception, imagination and conception. Ironically, at the same time, it opens up a territory in which artists can critically probe and reinterpret the issues of historicity and truth. 'New Media' such as photography, video and digital image making are hence endowed with a new function, as sites of 'reality' production.

Wong Hoy Cheong, a Kuala Lumpur–based artist, scholar and political activist, has researched and explored the rich, complicated and often challenging history of Malaysia, from its colonial past to contemporary reality, in his multimedia work, which includes drawings, performance, installation and video. His black and white photographic series 'Chronicle of Crime' ventures into the terrain from a particularly accurate and efficient angle, by reenacting the roles of some 'legendary' Malaysian criminals to expose 'slipperiness between the real and imagined, the lived trauma and aestheticised re-enactments', and 'the momentary silences, pauses and tensions that exist between the moments of before and

after—before and after the crime, before and after death; the moments of moral decisions and accomplishment'.⁴ This tension, or inbetween-ness, provokes a suspension of reality, a reality deeply entangled in its unsolvable negotiations with postcolonial conditions and globalisation. Behind the uncannily playful appearances of the film-noir/Bollywood cool looks of the 'criminals', one can decipher a kind of existential anxiety, an ontological void. Inevitably, this recalls the collective psychological crisis and distorted identity of a nation, so powerfully stated in Frantz Fanon's formula 'black skin, white mask'.

The New York–based Kenyan Wangechi Mutu expresses this mixed sentiment of anxiety and suspicion in an even more straightforward and dramatic fashion, by adding a feminist dimension to them with her eccentrically complex, agonising but exuberantly beautiful magazine photo collage works. Oscillating between the sublime and the absurd, between sarcasm and pain, between sensual joy and sexual abuse, they are portraits of black women—the artist is one of them. More accurately, they are portraits of those whose existences have been deformed and reduced to impersonalised stereotypes of race and sex in consumer fashion or porn magazines. They are the media-age version of the violated subjects of colonial power and geopolitical exploitation. They are turned into a kind of interface of a falsified reality, hidden behind the mask of the official truth of colonialism and transnational capitalism. In parallel, Thierry Fontaine from the French overseas territory La Réunion, also employs to the format of portraiture or, more precisely, self-portraiture, to express such a violently emptied form of existence, or 'de-subjectisation'. More importantly, he also renders an expressive form to his desire to resist and revolt against such a condition of silencing and oppression. Thierry Fontaine's life, like his skin colour, is a kind of *métissage*, ultimately intimately rooted in the soil of the colony-island where the question of belonging, identity and dignity, like the muddy colour of the earth itself, has been forever suspended. The only way for him to show his face to the public gaze is to mask himself with mud. And his voice can only be audible behind the muteness of the earth. His large-scale photos of self-portraits—named '*Les Cris* (Screams)',

and 'Echo'—are the ultimate outcry of such an impossible existence.

Echoing this outcry of the *impasse* of human conditions, the Hong Kong–based Tsang Kin-Wah is a young witness of the postcolonial transition of the last British colony to the 'motherland', China. He comes up with poetic and sophisticated but sarcastic words spelled out in multimedia installations, with mixture of floral forms, religious and political texts and swear words found in the media. The Seven Seal series, referring to Christian eschatology with bible citations like 'They Are Already Old. They Don't Need to Exist Anymore', announces this end of the world with the arrival of the 'Last Judgement' in a subtle, poetical but profoundly ambivalent form. Utilising the most advanced technology of computer programs and video projection, he drives this contradiction further, rendering the very nature of doubt in his work even more striking. The electronically animated eschatological messages invade the space and seize one's soul like ghosts.

The contemporary human conditions, in the age of globalisation and the triumph of a certain dominant model of modernity, namely the Western one, that has defined and ruled the concept of humanity, truth and hierarchy of civilisations and hence the power relationship of the world over the last centuries, are now facing some fundamental distrusts and challenges. Artists living in transnational and transcultural situations of exile, migration and constant displacement are among those most sensitive in this respect. They rise up to contest the taken-for-granted order of things. Adel Abdessemed, a French artist of Algerian origin, is one of the most radical adventurers in this movement of contestation, with his particularly pungent strategy of attacking the established taboos of civilisation and boundary. His photographic works, including *Sept Frère*, *Séparation*, *Zéro Tolérance*, *Jumps a Jolt*, feature animals like wild boars, snakes, lions and donkeys loitering in the Parisian street. And the artist is 'playing with them' like a brother. In *Nafissa* and *Mes Amis*, the artist's mother, wife and children are invited to act in the same setting with the artist or animals or even skeletons, to enact the most unlikely street theatres. The artist claims that the street is his atelier. Here, it is not only the boundary between

art and everyday life that is broken down. The separations between man and nature, between life and death, which are so fundamentally crucial for the existence of the Western idea of humanity, are also blurred. The title of the work in which the artist's wife poses as a bride of a gorilla tells us all (quoting a Crittercam advertisement and inspired by Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet*): *Anything Can Happen When An Animal Is Your Cameraman.*[5]

Abdessemed's provocation evokes a critical querying of our existence: how to live with the other—human vs animal, city vs nature? This is indeed the most urgent but eternally unsolvable question. In our age of acceleration of human displacement, migration, encounter and negotiation, this question is deeply affecting our life. The coexistence of differences—racial, religious, cultural and political—is now the most real form of life. Every individual has to learn how to deal with a stranger as their closest neighbour and to embrace a foreign body. The premise for such an openness towards and merging with the other is to put one's self in question and suspend it. This may lead us to the paradise of human common destiny. However, how much one can really doubt about and suspend one's own identity and embrace the other? The Pakistani artist Hamra Abbas—an apparent Muslim now living in the United States—has made an elegant but somehow unlikely proposal in her new works: to perform massage on a white female body with her own 'coloured' hands in an Orientalist-style *hammam* and name it 'Paradise Bath'. At the same time, using the 'new' technology of Photoshop, she also proposes to erase the minarets of the mosques—the most emblematic sign of Islam and now an exotic signifier for tourist consumption of the other—in Istanbul, the Eurasian metropolis. At the time when the West is in a fanatical panic about the 'Islamic threats' and is cowardly rejecting Turkey's participation in the European community, can this act of erasure become a friendly compromise, despite the absurdity of the act itself?

Yes, the expansion of the European community may be a turning point for the global future. But where to and how to turn are actually the most difficult questions. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc and the end of the Cold War, along with the 'triumph' of neoliberal capitalism, are the dynamics

behind such an ambitious but highly ambivalent project. In the process, doubts and contests, along with uncertainties and fears about the direction to turn, are aroused. The most drastic reactions to such confusions are most visibly sensed by the populations in former communist countries — they have to make the 'transition', to surrender to the West and accept the 'virtues' of capitalism and democracy. This 'transition' is being carried out in the most ambivalent manner: material life seems to be improved for some, while the population is divided into rich and poor ones. Individuals are gaining apparent freedom while being thrown into the spiral of solitude and insecurity. One way for those intrigued by the confusion and struggling to survive this limbo-like condition, is to convince themselves that life is simply a drama of self-mockery, mixing hope, memory, nostalgia and aspiration, in a 'melting pot'. And the artists do it best: Dan Perjovschi, a Romanian artist who was a leader of the underground art movement during the communist years, has developed a personal language to satirically reinterpret media stories — from propaganda to commercial advertisement via all kinds of news headlines and celebrity gossip, as well as the hypocrisy of the art world — in simple chalk and marker drawings, to demonstrate the inherent paradox and absurdity of the 'truth' imposed by the media as powerful force to bring about the transition towards the dream of 'democracy'. Perjovschi's gestures appear to be light and easy. But they are capable of turning everything upside-down and subverting established values. His recent research has led him to a new experiment. For the exhibition, 'The Power of Doubt' under the title: *Looking around: one random drawing and some snapshots*, he created another site-specific work with both drawings and snapshot photos that recollect traces of 'accidentally' small, ignored and forgotten fragments of objects, signs and scenes in the city that most intimately and genuinely memorise the impacts of the social transition on the everyday environment. They are like Hitchcock's MacGuffins: barely visible, they haunt our unconsciousness. The Bulgarian Nedko Solakov, another leader of the underground scene in the Soviet Bloc, now internationally acclaimed, also intervenes in a similar process of retracing the memory of the past and wrestling

with the present. Resorting to the narrative model of the fairy-tale, he produced a huge number of illustrations and texts that demonstrate the paradox of the official truth and the helplessness of individuals facing the absurdity of reality. They are often conceived and shown site-specifically as installations with other media. Now, he has decided it's time to make a significant shift to open himself up to a new generation, to catch up with how the transition of social models are affecting youth and himself as a father. Hence, he developed a project with his son Dimitar, a teenaged photographer who has documented the new underground life of his friends, to come up with a father and son dialogue mutually commenting between themselves in the form of photo–text book. It is a testimony to the new complications between two generations in terms of mutual understanding facing the social transition. Is revolution an infinite endeavour to be inherited by all future generations? Or is it simply an empty promise?

This transition, or transformation, from an old age of ideological division to a kind of global consensus to embrace the 'promised land' of neoliberal capitalism, has some spectacular features—urban expansion and commoditisation of everything in life, including human relations. Transformation is seen in its most intense and dramatic expressions in the economical boom of the Asia Pacific region, especially in the giant China, a new Far West for all global capitalist adventurists. Chinese cities are the new battlefields of such an adventure: the urban spaces are going through unprecedented expansions with the real estate market as the main engine driving the economic growth. In the meantime, urbanisation and gentrification are pushing the poor and the locals out of urban centres, causing further social divisions and conflicts. This paradoxical logic of development is now seeing its limits, with the rise of human drama, corruption, violence and environmental crisis. The government, hand in hand with capital, is tightening social and cultural controls to maintain apparent stability at the price of scarifying basic human rights and freedoms. Facing the oppression of the powerful, the general public from both urban and rural areas are mounting protest campaigns and resistance, while a great number of intellectuals and legal professionals are becoming increasingly

aware of their new responsibility as agents of questioning and challenging the 'reality' and 'truth' imposed by authority. They are mounting rallies to defend civic rights. A considerable number of artists are also engaging their imagination and creativity in the tasks of testifying and exposing social conflicts, by producing art works that document, denounce and criticise this dire situation. Irony, humour, poetry and even playfulness are the most potent and effective expressions to confront social, political and individual confrontations. This is also a time when collective desire for 'growth' becomes totally frenetic, while ultimately every individual is feeling deeply isolated and lonely. Everything is doubtful. Everyone is hoping for a way out, facing a reality that is becoming extremely surreal. Jiang Zhi's photographic series like 'Things would turn unbelievable once they happened', and 'Things would turn illusive once they happened', are among the most extraordinarily poetic and poignant works produced in the Chinese art scene. They are highly personal and poetic reflections on the uncanny sentiment of being at once alienated from and still aspiring to transcend such a dreadful world. Eventually, it is by grasping such a tension and transforming it into a kind of surrealistic illumination that Jiang Zhi's work gains immense power. However, no one can really escape from the reality. The only way to continue to live is to fight for one's own right. Jiang Zhi's 'Things would turn nails once they happened', by shedding a kind of angelic light on the famous Wu's 'nail family house' in Chongqing—a symbol of lower class urban inhabitants' resistance to gentrification widely mediated in the press, which incited great social and political debates across the country—turns such a human drama into a glorious moment of tragic sublime and comic hope.⁶

This exuberant and excessive urban expansion is the official dream of the globalised world. From Shanghai to Dubai, from Mumbai to Mexico City, officials and capitalists are celebrating this new opportunity for development and self-empowerment. They paint it with most spectacular pictures. With forests of high-rise buildings and crowded highways, they cook up dreamlands beyond human imagination. Utopia returns eternally: this is a new promised heaven where people are going to happily live together and forever... Once

again, Chinese cities are the avant-gardes of such a 'historical achievement'. However, as we have seen above, reality always unfolds itself to an oppositional direction. Utopia is no more than dystopia—behind the shining glass walls of brand new skyscrapers, prosperity is always accompanied with chaos and even disaster. The urbanscape series 'Super Towers' by Du Zhenjun, a Paris based artist of Shanghai origin, demonstrates this perfectly. Instead of showing a 'primitive communist paradise', he turns the new Chinese cities into new Babel towers. He presents a contemporary version of apocalypse: hardly have the new towers—symbols of newly gained wealth and superpower—been built than they are already on fire and the earth flooded. The opening ceremony is orchestrated with earthquake and war. Du's catastrophic scenarios are obviously reminiscent of Bosch's infernal scenes. However, nothing is really fictional or surrealistic here. They are all images of real events. Indeed, all the images appearing here are entirely collected by the artist from news reports on the internet. The internet is the new interface of our reality today. The reality, while being reduced to digital pixels, has become a pool of ready-mades that substitute the truth. This strategy of resorting to the new ready-mades, interestingly, proves to be the most efficient demonstration of the real potential of our present and future, even they seem to be so unlikely.

This is how we recount our reality today, and probably how we will write our history in the future. Is history simply a collage of accidental events on the way, in humanities' endless search for the end of History, namely, Utopia? Does this search always end up falling into the opposite side of our aspiration—Dystopia? This has been the core obsession of our existence. It means something even more significant for those who have been living through 'historical transitions'—devoting their lives to emancipate themselves from oppression in order to achieve the dream of freedom and well-being. Sun Xun is a Beijing-based young artist who grew up in the post-revolution era in which China has fervently embraced the seemingly contradictory alliance of neoliberal capitalism and social control. Indeed, this alliance is the most reasonable and efficient one, since both camps are, in reality, the ultimate incarnations of the biopolitical manipulation of our way of

living. Sun Xun has been concentrating all his endeavours on revisiting, inquiring and subverting the official version of history, especially the established narrative of the making of the nation-state as truth and faith towards power and order, much propagated by authority. Different from the last generation of artists, who committed their lives to direct confrontation and quasi-physical fighting against authoritarian control, censorship and repression, Sun Xun pursues his interrogation in a dispassionate, distant, enduring and metaphysical manner while resorting only to traditional handmade techniques to produce his site-specific installations. These blend drawing, painting and animation films to express his mistrust of History. He has invented an alter ego of History, incarnated in the personage of the Magician that haunts all the scenes of his amazing animation films. The Magician is the professional in forging falsehood to replace reality: 'Magicians are the authority! A lie is the truth! And it's cheap!'[7] Naming his recent film '21 KE'—a summary of his decade-long investigations and work of imagination—he sets up a stage on which the soul (supposedly weighing 21 grams, or *ke* in Chinese) flies away from the body. This soulless body, following the conjuring stick of the Magician, is plunged into a black hole of History: 'History is a circle, irregular but relatively standard round. It is full of regrets, and *pi* is not a true formula anymore; any revolution is a lame compass, keeps turning ungratefully, and ends up with nothing.'[8]

Therefore, reality and fiction, lie and truth, are all turned into a meaningless chaos, a *huntun* in the Chinese ontological term—amusingly, the famous Chinese dumpling *wonton* earns its name from such a messy but somehow poetic picture of the Cosmos. Our perception of the world has completely lost its reliability. We are no longer able to really see the world through our senses. Hence, doubting the credibility of our perception is simply useless. We can see the world without using our eyes! Pak Sheung-Chuen, a Hong Kong–based artist who considers tricks to detour and distort his everyday experiences as his real artistic work—including eating *wonton* as a daily food—invites us to participate in a game: how to see the world without using eyes. In his project, 'A Travel Without Visual Experience', he joined a tourist group to Malaysia with

his eye blindfolded. He took photos of the tourist spots on the trip without being able to see them himself. Then, he installed the photos in a darkroom decorated with typical Malaysian domestic wall paper and broadcast the ambient sounds recorded during the trip. The audience is invited to enter the darkroom with a compact camera. They shoot the views with the flash. This is the only moment they can actually 'see' the images or the actual people, landscapes and objects that the artist has not been able to see. In the darkness, we ask: what have we really seen? Does it show us how the world really is?

'The Power of Doubt', by bringing together this wide range of artistic imaginations, sought to confront the question of the truth. Or, more precisely, to allow us to doubt together. It is in sharing this doubt that we feel our existence. Stimulated by the accidental and flashy moments of enlightening, we continue to strive to live together. At the same time, we continue to doubt … about everything.

This is how life appears meaningful to us; and making art still worthwhile...

Notes

1   H. Hanru, *The Power of Doubt* (Madrid: Photo Espana, 2011).
2   S. Gladwell, notes on *Double Field*, Afghanistan, email to the author, 20 August 2010.
3   S. Sikander, statement on *Bending the Barrels*, 2009, in Hanru.
4   Wang Hoy Cheong's statement on *Chronicles of Crime*, in Hanru.
5   D. Harraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
6   H. Hanru, 'Living with(in) the urban fiction (notes on urbanization and art in post-Olympic China)', *Yishu, Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* (May – June 2009).
7   S. Xun, Statement on *21 KE*, leaflet (Shanghai: Minsheng Art Museum, 2010.
8   Ibid.