

面向現況的脫逸——談湯皇珍的「我去旅行」 1999-2000

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「老畫家向友人展示近作。畫中有塊園地與一條沿著溪走的小徑；它穿過叢林而終止於小屋前。此屋有一扇小門可讓人進入。然而，當友人回顧時，畫家卻已離去：他竟在畫中。畫家步上那可抵及屋門的小徑，回顧，微笑，並自門縫中消失無蹤。(註1)」

視聽裝置

為何要引述這則傳奇？理由很多，但起因是湯皇珍去年底為期月餘的藝術行動「我去旅行」。

在環亞百貨的女化妝品專櫃AVEDA櫥窗裡，湯皇珍擺了一件組裝物；這是一件裝有汽車雨刷的電視螢幕，當中的畫面同步地播映著行經此處、被攝影機拍攝的路人身影。趣味的陳設，儘管其意圖不明，卻誘人駐足關照；而櫥窗就是為了形塑商品氛圍，引人進入店家消費的一種框架。然而，當人走進店內，只要依看板操作，這件組裝物所蘊含的空間幅度便由此展開，呈現另一番景致。

這裡有具供人使用的電話，只要撥通，「視聽裝置」便開始啟動。一方面，螢幕中的路人身影（包括觀眾本人）會立即被藝術家的容貌（事先錄製）所取代——表情是臉部緊繃而微顫，像是在外面餐風露宿，且嘴中念念有詞。此時你必須聆聽電話，將聽到的台灣地名（起自花蓮港、經池上、台東等地至鵝鑾鼻），用筆依序地圈選在現場備妥、印有地名的明信片上，然後寄給藝術家——這是她為觀眾設想的旅行。另一方面，藝術家攜帶另一組「視聽裝置」旅行，相繼在台北、台中、高雄與台東四座城市之某據點落腳數日，以便接收來自台北的觀眾電話；只要他接通（她與觀眾在電話中不作交談），前述提及的地名播報系統便自行啟動傳送台北；此時，你的容貌便立即由台北轉換到她隨身攜帶的電視螢幕裡。

把「溝通行為」詮釋成一種旅行，是湯皇珍次作命題的所在(註2)。這自然不能以傳統的審美標準視之，因為它與製作物件的手藝無關，反而關係到記號的操作、事件的謀劃等美學效應。正如苟克蘭 (A. Cauquelin) 所指出的，當代藝

術的現實是外在於作品品質，是建構於「作品在資訊通路中所激起的影像」上；這種影像猶如記號，是一種語言運作。換句話，藝術現實是語言的建構及其所構織的網路，而非「感官賦予的實證存在」(註3)。

身影——「在」與「不在」

的確，作為一種記號，地名可隔空喚起觀者對地理的想像或回憶；如邀請卡所示，雨刷在螢幕上刷動，詩意的喚起雨中駕車的窗景亦非奢望。然而，在AVEDA的商品消費世界裡，又有什麼能擔保這份詩意是個承諾！除非我們不去理會展出語境，略過櫥窗而走入其中，冥想自己浸淫在湯皇珍的「視聽裝置」裡。但這種假想的「走入」——或說滲入——又發生了什麼呢？

誠如許綺玲所言，這是「在」與「不在」的課題——或如其評論標題所指：「無限風景的遊戲」(註4)。藉觀眾到場的「在」，湯皇珍在螢幕裡向觀眾現身，宣告自己的「不在」：她去旅行了。螢幕裡的湯皇珍，取代了原先螢幕裡的觀眾，而觀眾被轉換到她隨身的螢幕裡現身：依她看來，觀眾也去旅行了——湯皇珍便如此說：「一個莫名其妙的觀眾可能會好奇用我這個設備打通電話看看，他一旦撥號，就中斷了他自己原來的移動，進入我為他指示的旅行」(註5)。

誰都知道，這裡只有藝術家的旅行才是來真的。但有意思的是，透過「視聽裝置」，湯皇珍試圖將她的旅行書寫成一個想像的、類似鏡像反射的對稱圖示：你來看我去旅行，我也來看你去旅行；你在，看我之「不在」，正如我在，看你之「不在」——而所謂「不在」，都是彼此在螢幕顯現的身影之「在」。

身影，「我去旅行」之靈魂所繫，亦如那則在班雅明記憶中源自中國、令其縈繞許久的傳奇故事：友人受邀觀畫，目睹畫家遁入畫中世界，與畫合一的身影幻化。以其劇情之奇幻，說是友人觀畫入迷的夢境亦不為過。甚至，那位遁入畫中的畫家，無非就是觀畫友人的自我投射——反之亦無不可，友人是畫家從作者轉為觀者的化身。事實上，整個故事場景本身彷彿一幅畫，在結構上如佛洛伊德所說的夢境。這是觀者與畫家所在的情境的仿同，是夢的「賦形能力」(figurabilité)的一種「濃縮作用」(condensation)(註6)；而在看與被看之同時，彼此都在表達「遊」這項共同的欲求。

「遊」，一種批判的可能途徑

說到「遊」，這則傳奇充分體現了六朝情境美學的旨趣；例如，劉勰提出「神居胸臆，物沿耳目」的「神與物遊」(註7)文藝理論，謝靈運的「寓目身觀」(註8)之山水意識，或宗炳畫論的「披圖幽對，坐究四荒」(註9)等等。這種「物/我或(心/物)」哲學實可溯及道家莊子，而「遊」正是其書文理的機杼，意指一種與道冥契的逍遙，「上與造物者遊」(註10)的精神解放。

在天人乖離、昔日「神遊」變奏的現代性裡，「遊」這項辭格的提出，倒著彰顯了湯皇珍行動本身對當今會的救贖義函。這可從一個反例，王俊傑97年的「極樂世界螢光之旅」談起。

同樣是結合賣場展出，王俊傑在現場安排電腦供人預約觀光團次，畫面顯示的是假造、聳動的圖文資料。這是一部徹底的、令人一笑置之的觀光虛構，戲劇性的揭露旅遊在當代消費社會的異化；不過其方式是戲擬的，並與之同謀，製造彼方的「擬像」（simulacre）——也就是說，「指涉對象的幻影」（註11）。彼方是社會集體慾望的投射，而觀光正如紀德堡（Guy Debord）所極力批判的渡假，是一項屬於「影劇社會」（la société du spectacle）、在現代商品經濟所複製的「偽循環時間」裡的消費單位（註12）。

反觀「我去旅行」，湯皇珍獨行踽踽，旅行不觀光。其低調的行事，親身踐履彼方，與前者相較顯然是一項逆向操作，透露一種欲求在身體經歷上與真實世界的彌合。我們可以說，湯皇珍的「視聽裝置」是地點與事件的建構，遊戲規則與活動空間的設定。它雖不侈言批判，卻暗合了西方五、六零年代間「國際境遇者」針貶資本社會的策略，可視為紀德堡的「精神地理遊戲」的一種應用：這是透過「不斷的偏航」（註13），意圖恢復「旅行的現實」，使生活有如一趟「涵蓋所有意義的旅行」（註14）。這種遊戲絕非孤例，日本藝術家山口野（On Kawara）一系列的行動便是早期著名案例；例如，68年「我起床」、「我走了」、或70年「我仍活著」等作，作者藉由文件、明信片、電報等媒介，將訊息傳送到指定的畫廊展出。

敘事者的寓言

無疑的，現代浪漫主義的主體意識在此再度聲揚，但我們要強調的是她對敘事者之「口說傳統」的繼承（註15）。

就班雅名來看，真正的敘事者（說故事的人）表徵了經驗交換與轉述傳承的永恆價值，其目標是使「『所說的事』跟『說此事的人的生命本身』同化為一」；前述提及的畫家示畫、與畫合一的傳奇亦可如此作解（註16）。在這層意義上，湯皇珍作為一位敘事者的當代繼承人，是將她那個以「視聽裝置」建構的「旅事」，融入到她身體力行的旅行中；而猶如那位遁入畫中、在消失前自門內「遙望」的畫家，去旅行的湯皇珍現身螢幕，或許就是其存在姿態的一種自我展示。

然而，問題的癥結便在於此：在記號語用學的意義上，這畢竟是以AVEDA為展出語境，依附在資本經濟空間體制裡發音。這不是前述的救贖義函失落了；相反的，它是以寓言形式寓居於此，試圖向熙攘的人群，以溝通互動的「超本文」發出一道異它的訊息：當代版的沒有故事的故事，極簡到「不在」的遊戲身影——且不論及女性在父權體制下出遊的能動性。不可諱言，這是敘事內容的危機，文化的一種徵狀；且慶幸的是湯皇珍不求助於虛矯、時下流行的劇情圖像，而堅持「後設語言」在操作上的可能詩意。

昔日，以革命的暴動形式攻擊現狀的「前衛」已逝，當今藝術或許只能以密謀、隱身幕後的狙擊，不時地騷動現狀。雖其成效難定，但湯皇珍的「我去旅行」應當屬於此類。縱使在人潮匯聚處的它顯得乏人問津，但自有其隱身都會的靈光顯現：這是一個帶有「邈遠訊息」的脫逸，「離此遠去」的一種美學姿態；儘管它是如此地迫近商品世界的「現況」。

Freed From The Reality – The Trance And Elusion *A Note on Tang's "I Go Traveling"*

© Chen Tai-Song

"An old painter showed his friend his recent painting. In the painting there is a yard with a path by the creek; and, the path goes through the bushes towards a small house. The house has a small door for people to walk in. However, when the friend turned around the painter had already left: All of a sudden the friend found the painter himself in the painting – he is walking along the path to the house, turning around, smiling, and disappearing behind the gap of the door..."¹

Audio/Video Installation

Why is this legend brought up? There are many reasons. The major one is artist Tang Huang-Chen's ("Tang") more than one month's artistic experience in last year's *"I Go Traveling"*.

Installed inside the Aveda showcase in AsiaWorld department store is Tang's assembled artwork – a TV screen equipped with automobile wipers, with a camera working to take in all customers passing by, simultaneously. Unsure about its intentions though, this interesting setup has successfully attracted people's attention. The purpose of "framing" the image of the merchandise is then achieved as people have been drawn to the front of the store to see what it tries to deliver. More surprisingly, when people enter the store and play with the gadget according to instructions, a fantasy into the space is triggered, with infinite whimsies.

In the gadget there is an operable telephone, and once connected, an "Audio/Video installation" will be prompted. At this time, the customers (including the one who makes the call) whose images are taken by the camera are soon replaced by a pre-recorded artist's face (Tang's face), and with her tense facial expression as if she is trembling and mumbling in the wind, we sense a camping in the distant wilderness. Watching the screen, you have to

listen to what it says on the telephone. The telephone automatically tells you different places in Taiwan ranging from Hua-lien Port, Chrshang, Taitung, to Eluanbi Peninsula, requiring you to circle the names of the places printed on the prearranged postcards, in sequence, and then mail to the artist. This is the kind of trip Tang has designed for her audience. At the same time, Tang is bringing along another set of "Audio/Video installation" to travel in Taipei, Taichung, Kaohsiung and Taitung, respectively, to receive phone calls from her audience in Taipei. Once connected, though not conversing with her audience, the aforementioned automatic place-reporting Audio/Video system is started and the audience in Taipei will then receive the message from the

¹ W. Benjamin, "Sens unique", pp.70-71, ed. Maurice Nadeau, Paris, 1988. French edition by Jean Lacoste.

phone concurrently. In return, the face of the audience will then be transmitted from Taipei to the portable TV screen carried by Tang.

Translating a “Communication Behavior” into a trip is the soul of Tang’s creation². Her inspiration cannot be easily evaluated by the traditional standards of aesthetics, as it relates nothing to the crafts of arts; on the contrary, it relates more to the meaning of “signal” and the impact of an event’s “planning”. Like what A. Cauquelin points out, the reality of contemporary art is external to the nature of the creation itself; further, it is structured on the basis of “the image of the creation stirred by the information channels.” This kind of image simulates a “signal” and functions like a language. In another words, the reality of arts is formed by the language and networks it is weaving, not simply “a corroborated existence endowed by the senses³”.

Image – “In” and “Out”

Indeed, as a signal the name of the place transcends the space and brings to mind the audience’s memory and imagination for that place. For example, the invitation letter shows the wipers wiping the screen, lyrically recalling the driving in the rain. However, in a merchandise’s world such as Aveda’s, there is no guarantee for a poetic inspiration to take effect. Unless we ignore the spirit of this artwork and simply walk in, unintentionally falling into Tang’s “Audio/Video installation”, things could then be otherwise. If this presumption of “walk in” or “falling into” stands, what would possibly have happened then?

Like what Hsu Chi-Ling indicates, this artwork contains either the issues of “in” and “out” or “A Game of Eternal Scenery⁴”, as she tries to interpret the subject of this artwork. When the audience is “in” the installation, Tang’s image shows up on the screen to inform the audience that she is “out” for a trip. Her image replaces that of the audience who is supposed to be projected through the camera; and, in return, the audience’s image transcends through miles and appears on the artist’s portable TV screen. To the artist, the audience goes

traveling as well. Tang says, “a curious audience might want to make a phone call from the gadget I set up for him/her, and once it gets connected, his/her mind of thinking is interrupted and falls into a trip I have directed for him/her⁵.”

Everybody knows that only the artist’s trip is for real. Interestingly, however, through the “Audio/Video installation” Tang attempts to interpret her traveling as a imaginary, yet mirror-like, reflective symmetry. In the symmetry, you watch me traveling and I watch you traveling; and when you are “in”, I am “out”, and vice versa. However “out” in perception, our images are all “in” when taken by the camera and shared on the screen.

² See Tang’s “Exhibition Proposal”.

³ “l’art contemporain”, ed. P.U.F, p.40, p.60, Paris, 1992.

⁴ Hsu Chi-Ling, “A Game of Eternal Scenery”, *Liberty Times*, Nov. 10, 1999, p. 39.

⁵ See Tang’s “Exhibition Proposal”.

Image, the soul of Tang's "*I Go Traveling*", relates back to the legend that had long obsessed W. Benjamin when he recalled those fantastic illusions in China – a friend was invited to appreciate the painter's painting, and illusively, the painter eluded into the painting and became part of the legend. You can see this legend as a daydream when the painter's friend was in a trance trying to appreciate the essence of the

painting. Even more, the painter who had evaded into his own painting may be just a reflection of his friend's mindset. Likewise, the friend himself may be the incarnation of the painter. Actually, the whole story is depicted as a painting, similar to Floyd's world of dreams. It is the dream's "condensation"⁶ in its "embodiment" (figurabilité). While we are indulging in the real meaning of this legend, here comes the common call for "roaming".

"Roaming", A Door Opened For Discussion

Speaking of "roaming", it fully expresses the admiration for aesthetics that was specifically encouraged in the Six Dynasties of ancient Chinese history. For example, Liu Hsieh brought up the "Spirits contained within, senses roam with objects" to bolster his artistic theory of "Spirits roam with objects"⁷; Hsieh Ling-Yun also refers to his awareness of the beauty for the mountains and water and further incorporate it into his "Captured by the eyes, read by the body"⁸; moreover, "Laying the painting and trancing into the wilderness"⁹ that was proposed by Tsong Bing is another example of painting theory. This philosophy of "Object & Me" or "Mind & Object" can be traced back to Chuang Chou's Taoism, with "roaming" being the soul. It means a divine dialogue with Taoist spirit, mentally liberated by "roaming with deities"¹⁰.

While we are facing a dysfunctional world without the past "roaming spirits" being cherished nowadays, the idea of "roaming" proposed by Tang at this

time serves as a salvation in our society. A comparison with a counter-example cited by Wang Chun-Chieh's "A Trip with Fireflies in the Seventh Heaven" in 1997 is provided here.

With the same idea of displaying the artwork in a market place, Wang Chun-Chieh had set up a computer for the visitors to schedule their tours. On the screen there were fake yet vivid pictures and literatures. This idea was a complete fabrication and could simply be laughed away, though it tried to uncover the traveling industry's deviation, in a dramatic way, when having to cater to the consumption needs of our society. The way he designed his artwork is like a drama while sharing the same idea as Tang– creating "simulacre", forging "an illusion of your counterpart"¹¹. The counterpart

⁶ Floyd, "Analysis of Dreams", pp. 342-366, jointly translated by Lu Chun, Kao Shen-Chuen and Ho Hsang-Chun, ed. Mina belle, Taipei, 2000.

⁷ Liu Hsieh, "A Polished Heart to Carve Dragons" - Transcendental Meditation.

⁸ Cheng Yu, "An Overview on the Theory of Aesthetics in The Six Dynasties", p. 160.

⁹ Tsong Bing, "A Preface on Paintings of Mountains and Water".

¹⁰ "Chuang Chou" - The World.

¹¹ J. Baudrillard, "Pour un critique de l'économie politique du signe", pp.182-190.

referred hereunder is a reflection of our community's desire, and the tour means a "vacation" which was harshly criticized by Guy Debord as a consumption unit from "A society of drama" (la société du spectacle) and the "quasi-circulation of time" replicated by the modern economy¹².

Back to Tang's "*I Go Traveling*", she went along without touring around. Her low profile and the commitment to converse spiritually with her counterpart is just the

opposite of what Wang Chun-Chieh did, revealing a desire to fuse a real life experience with the reality. We can explain that Tang's "Audio/Video Installation" is a structure of places and events, combined with rules of game and preset activities. Her idea is not to criticize anything, though applying the strategies used by the "international activists" to critique the Capitalist society in the Western world in 1950s and 1960s. It contains the spirit of Guy Debord's "a spiritual & geographical game", to return to "the reality of traveling" through "endless deviation"¹³, making our lives "a comprehensive trip"¹⁴. This is not an isolated event. A series of actions taken by the Japanese artist On Kawara can be a good example in early times. For example, the works of "I Wake Up" and "I Leave" in 1968, and "I Am Still Alive" in 1970 On Kawara transmitted his artworks to designated galleries through the mediums of documents, postcards and telegraphs.

A Parable from the Narrator

Undoubtedly, the core concept of the modern Romanticism has again exerted her power. This time we have to emphasize her narrator's role in the inheritable "verbal traditions"¹⁵.

For W. Benjamin, a real narrator (story teller) signifies the perpetual value of experience exchange and interpretation of legacy, with a purpose to "mix 'the story told' with 'the story teller's life'", and, to make them one. The aforementioned painter's legend and spiritual integration can be a good example¹⁶. In this regard, Tang, as an inheritor of the narrator, interpreted her "journey" into an actual trip, enlivened by an Audio/Video installation. Like the painter evading into his painting and peeking behind the door before disappearing, Tang's appearing on the screen is a statement to prove her existence.

¹² Guy Debord, "La Société du Spectacle", p.118, Paris, 1992.

¹³ Lin Chi-Ming, "Contemporary Era"117- Guy Debord and French Aggressive Thinking, p.13, Taipei, 1996, Jan.

¹⁴ Guy Debord, "La Société du Spectacle", p.136, Paris, 1992.

¹⁵ W. Benjamin, "Story Teller", translated by Lin Chi-Ming, ed. Taiwan Photographic Studio, Taipei, 1998.

¹⁶ This is a hint from the narrator. Actually, in the painter's legend, W. Benjamin, a fan of Chinese culture, talked about his childhood experience when he water painted, "I make color, and the color makes me;" "I feel like a china vase, walking into its clouds."

Yet, there is a problem. However inspirational, in terms of Signal Semantics “Aveda” is still the main character to attract customers. The signal is only effective when giving in to the Capitalist economy.

It does not mean that Tang’s “salvation” has failed; instead, she mythologizes “communications and interactions” with a parable to convey to the people her unique messages. In the parable there is no story told and only the message of “out for a trip” is delivered, regardless of the possibility of traveling in a society of patriarchy. Frankly, it imposes a crisis for narration and forms another face of culture; but fortunately, Tang still sticks to her principle of poetic invention without being trapped in a state of forgery and mediocrity.

In the past, the “avant-garde” used to be a violent means to revolutionize an undesired condition. However, this approach is no longer effective. At present, arts can only express her discontent by secretly collaborating behind the scene, trying to disturb an unpleasant status quo. Tang’s ***“I Go Traveling”*** is one of them, though the outcome is uncertain. Notwithstanding in a dim corner amid the crowds, her insights are lit somewhere in the city. It is a trance carrying a “celestial message”, an elusion with an aesthetic call. Though it is so close to the “reality”- a merchandise world.