

The Heterogeneous Faceless Portrait

In the exhibition opening at Vanguard Gallery in November, I watched a video work titled *No News from Home* by artist Hsu Che-Yu. This video consists of two totally different image forms. One is the outlined characters animated by the artist against the background; the other is the scene and surroundings filmed through live-action shooting in the background. The animated characters in Hsu's work are deliberately designed against the most fundamental perspective principle, acting as inferior yet tough planktons trapped in video code errors. Clothes are replaced with tiled patterns which seemed like digital textures left a trace unintentionally on human bodies. In contrast, the background is based on the live-action shot script. However, even in such plain shooting, Hsu Che-Yu explicitly refused to reveal more information by zooming in details or moving the camera.

This exhibition also presents two other artworks in addition to the video. One is a faceless portrait format from photo studio and a piece of letter. Words in the letter keeps upgrading the another's description of bizarre details, as well as enhancing his desire to confirm. Other one is a work that consists of video footages found online. Faces of figures in the videos are mostly removed. The last piece exhibited in the gallery includes the video mentioned above and a tiny sketch of a tattooed man hanging on the black wall in the screening space. So far, I have to admit that I skipped the core of Hsu Che-Yu's work intentionally—— family life, the inevitable family life with noway to escape.

The topic on cruelty of social life and how it is distributed to individuals secretly yet orderly stimulates Hsu Che-Yu's nerve. Sometime such cruelty appears in the terrifying social news; sometime it embodies as history fragments in archives. Some parts of the cruelty are life tragedies grown from the entanglement of literature practice; others may be those unforgettable days and nights in life with family and friends. When facing such a topic, Hsu Che-Yu is set in a paradox set: On one hand, He tries to avoid the homogeneous and emotional representation in media or archive; On the other hand, Hsu wants to preserve the indifference and an application of psychological projection he observed in media discourse. Thus in my view, the cruelty in Hsu Che-Yu's work comes from the distance of public media's representation and is established from the artistic distance he restored. It is the counteraction of this paradox and these two types of distance, which offers a point for audience to read through the development of his work. I believe this is also a point where the exhibition starts. Undoubtedly, the similarity and difference in the way how Hsu Che-Yu treats portraits in these three works, and the elaboration of the relationship between texts and self-dissevered images have provided us with some new answers. The faceless portrait of heterogeneity perhaps is exactly a trial portrait of the word cruelty.