

Yixin Tong's Creation

Author: Chen Jiayin Editor: He Jingwen Photo: Yixin Tong
2014-05-15



Installation View: Average Sweethearts: Dueling Scar & Driving Accident, 2014

“Language is language. Language speaks.”

“The sound of thinking must be poetic, because a poem is the statement of truth.”

Yixin Tong's exhibition “Average Sweethearts: Dueling Scar & Driving Accident” in 80WSE Gallery is originated from a self-written poem:

To live lives alive
Stand firm from salad and nearby
Average sweethearts





Installation View: Average Sweethearts: Dueling Scar & Driving Accident, 2014

Average Sweethearts. A sweetheart but average. A contraction. He said that it is alike the title of another work *confirmed Romance*. Romance but confirmed. It seems like an ordinary arrangement, but when looking closely it produces a logical contraction. Yixin Tong's creation is good at digging out tiny ridiculousness hidden in daily life. The title works as a string, evoking disturbed and spreading sense from the calm surface.

Yixin Tong's work is not just a found object sculpture.

He collected odds and ends from daily life, whose roles are re-assigned in their space separately. For example, several fragments of cabs, with a piece of orange peel on the side, curved iron wire, a green jelly candy on a wooden stick, power supplies without its owner. The arrangement of objects escaped from its original cognitive system. Symbols and meanings are overlapping interdependently, making a new scenery structure among objects. Accordingly, the audience's cognition is also obstructed, flowing and re-exchanging.



Installation View: Average Sweethearts: Dueling Scar & Driving Accident, 2014

Duel Scar is echoing with Yixin Tong's favour towards heroism, romance and conflicted ridiculousness. In his research, in the early 20th century, duel scar was popular among the upper class in Germany and Austria, regarded as "a symbol of glory". At that time, people even duel with each other to make scars. Scars become the symbol of the elite group.

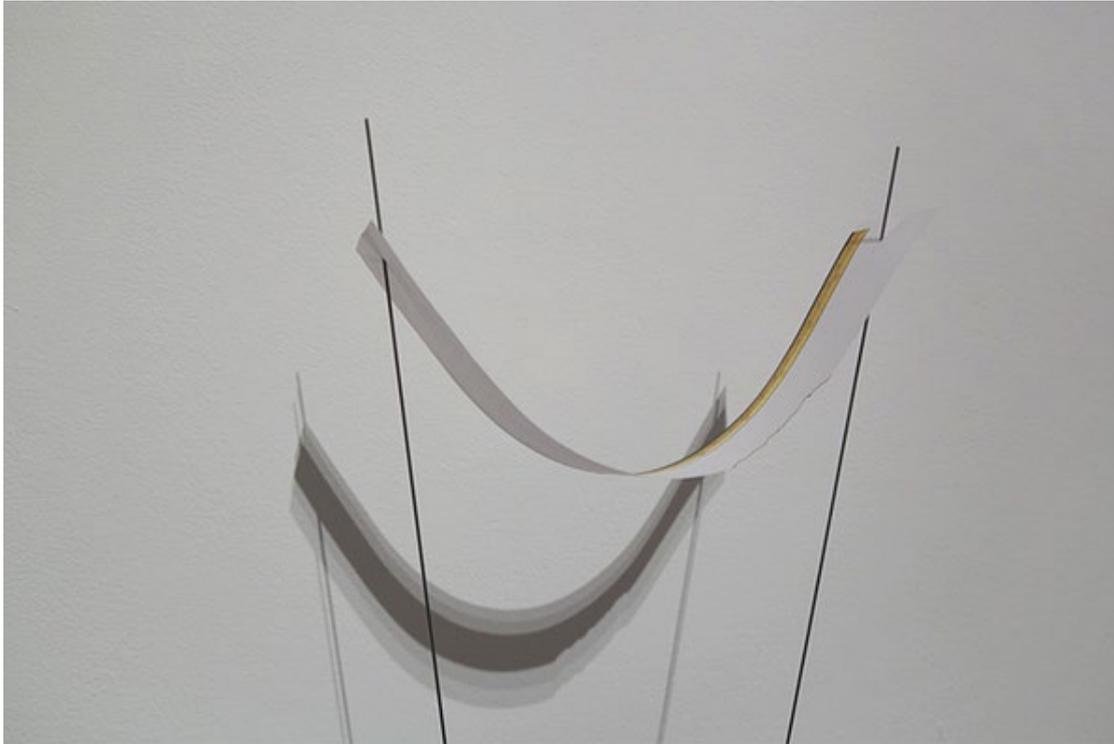
"Duel scar and driving accident" is an anecdote of a German Nazi officer, who was sentenced to hanging in Nuremberg Trial after World War II. The scar on this officer's face is due to a traffic accident rather than a brave duel.



Installation View: Average Sweethearts: Dueling Scar & Driving Accident, 2014

The connection among sweetheart, duel scar and car accident reflects the contraction of meaning and ridiculousness of the interpretation. The artist put away objects and text. This kind of “arrangement” is closer to excavation. Through the comparison among objects, languages are liberated from it, vice versa.





Installation View: Average Sweethearts: Dueling Scar & Driving Accident, 2014

“Duelist’s lover” is a set of adjectives written on the whole wall to describe the duelist’s lover. Those adjectives are coming from poet Susanna Centlivre’s drama *The Beau’s Duel* (A Soldier for the Ladies) in 1702. When all the adjective is found out and put together, creating a funny effect.

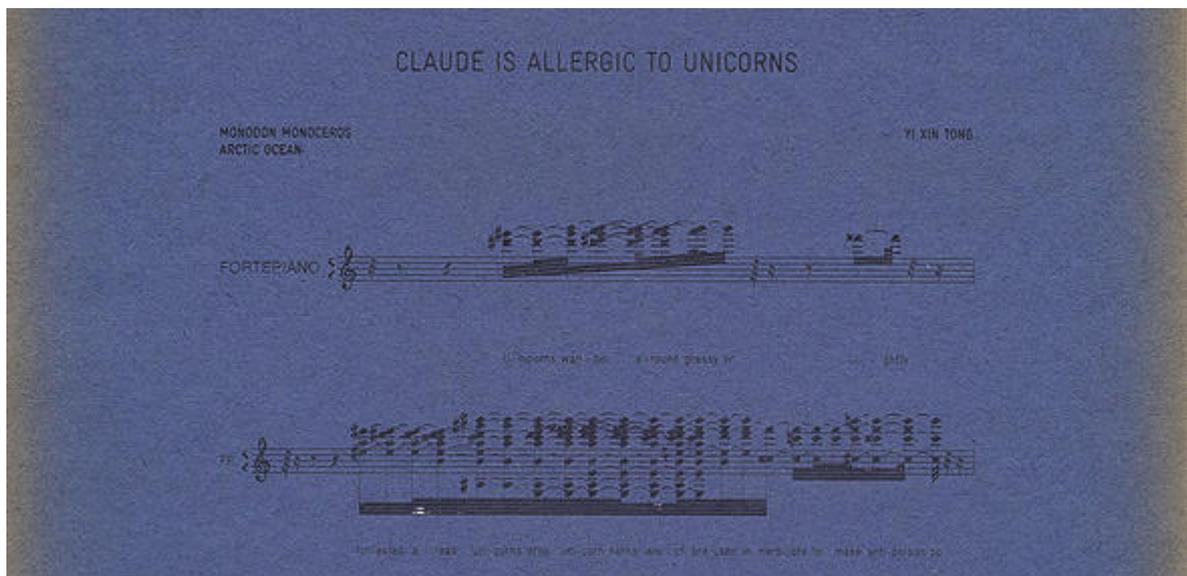
“Duelist’s lover is present, happiest, secretive, agreeable, loving, virtuous, constant, blessing, pale...desperate...troublesome...violent, engaging...”

The act of extracting adjective corresponds with the relationship between language and reality (the appearance of lover). Eventually, the lover is lost in the countless adjective words. Those adjective words are conflicting with each other, until people (audience) can’t picture her face.



Installation View: Claude Is Allergic to Unicorns, 2013

Yinxin Tong's previous work *Claude Is Allergic to Unicorns* also uses the language denotation of signifier relationship to unfold the audience's imagination. "Unicorn" is an ancient legendary creature, while the artists fabricate a person "Claude" who is allergic to the legendary creature. Through Claude's narrative of his allergy to unicorn, the audience is allured in to "a wonderland which does not exist in reality" and departs to find the unicorn.



Various objects, which are picked and collected by the artists, are placed in the small exhibition hall, weightless and in various shapes. Using the audience's body as the centre, daily objects and different memories within the body are composed into a private map, develop a space in the "wonderland". In the video, there are a symphony conductor waving a pointed stick, musical notes in the score, neon tubes on the ground, a nail in the picture, and duck puppets. Those riddles surrounded the text composes the images in the audience, connecting with the denotation on "unicorn".



Installation View: Claude Is Allergic to Unicorns, 2013

"This is not a pipe" is written on René Magritte's pipe drawing, becoming a famous series in the art history. Magritte's pipe evokes the audience to interpret the critical relationship between language and image, also the further philosophical exploration. From this point of view, Yixin Tong's *Claude Is Allergic to Unicorns* uses a fiction narrative way to construct the expectation mentality of the audience. Around the exhibition, the audience can only find the trace of unicorns on objects rather than unicorn itself. On the contrary, this invisible unicorn is responding to the reality of "unicorn": its non-existent existence. Heidegger in the book *Poetry, Language, Thought* wrote: "people behave like they are the creator and owner of language, but in fact language is the owner of people." Through the invisible unicorns, the artist also finds thinking as a language to express, holding an essential characteristic.

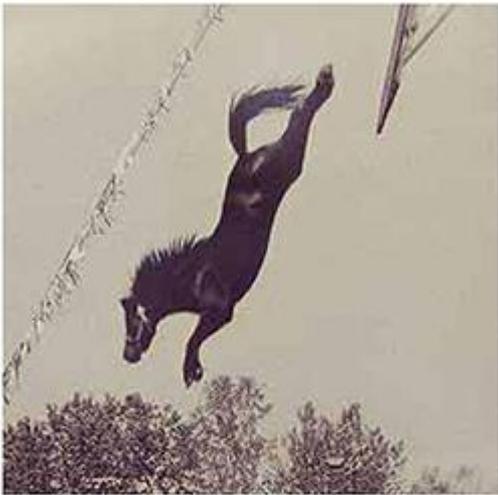
To compare, the series of "Average Sweethearts" has a broader poetic sense. Yixin Tong adds lots of intuitive creation, for instance, huge orange peel frottage, small Africa map stick to the wall, wooden

carving skills to make garden photos album, and writing a few poem sentences on the object. “Average Sweetheart” is trying to be ambiguous deliberately, but uses the intuition to represent the thinking itself beyond the language, showing the hidden and untouchable places and broadening the imagination.



I thought I arrived at a wonderland.

25



And suicidal horses.

37

Yixin Tong's creative approach is like a modern wanderer, a city rover. He collects the fragments of daily life and transforms them into poems. The project "Wind-speed Indicator" is executed during his latest art residence. Yixin Tong read through all books in the art section of the library. At the same time, using the camera function of the phone, he selected photos in the book randomly and then created impromptu videos. Also, he adds some short narrative and non-linear text to videos, similar to the traveling note. He uploaded them on Instagram right away and then made them into a book. These images and words are randomly captured at a certain moment. Together with the viewer's own experience, they are stacked up a poetic space. The work *21 71* is a poetic work which is extracted from the normality, a poetry existed in the fictional space. On the English learning website manythings.org, there are 2171 example sentences written by online volunteers. Yixin Tong views those example sentences as another form of found objects. Those found objects are transformed into poem sentences, following the artist's concept.

21 71: Nothing (2013)

image screenshot

Nothing

I've heard **nothing**.
I have **nothing** to say.
We saw **nothing** strange.
It was **nothing** but a joke.
I have **nothing** better to do.
He gave it to me for **nothing**.
I got the ticket for **nothing**.
The curry was **nothing** special.
He seems to make **nothing** of it.
Now he has **nothing** to live for.
I said **nothing** about the matter.
She did **nothing** but cry all day.
She had **nothing** to do yesterday.
There is **nothing** wrong with him.
She acted as if she knew **nothing**.
Tom and I have **nothing** in common.
I have **nothing** in common with her.
I have **nothing** in common with him.
Nothing can force me to give it up.
Nothing seems to grow in this soil.
She has **nothing** in common with him.
For three weeks, he ate **nothing** at all.
She acted as if she knew **nothing** about it.
She said **nothing** that would make him angry.
She claims that she knows **nothing** about him.
A selfish man thinks of **nothing** but his own feelings.
There was **nothing** to do but wait until the next morning.
Today I just feel like staying at home and doing **nothing**.
She claims that she knows **nothing** about him, but I don't believe her.
He says that he saw **nothing**. However, I don't believe what he says is the truth.

http://imggphx.com/9W9W21_71242 New York May 08 2014 18:18:58 GMT+0400 (EDT)

Charmed by the heroic adventure and romance but ridiculous things, Yixin Tong's creation seems like he is following his heart and not chasing for the exquisite form, but actually his works have resulted from the careful arrangement. Under the ordinary surface, there is the language of poems being hidden layer by layer. Because it is selected from the ordinary items in the daily life, the

audience have a shared feeling based on their life experience. Even after leaving the exhibition hall, it can also ferment, grow and deform in everyone's daily scenery.



Dadaism appropriates found object, rejects conventional art approach. The avant-garde and shocking side at that time is not a novelty anymore nowadays. Even so, when we look around the museums, there are large works everywhere, which are extensive and force you to experience. It looks like an unspoken ceremony. Compared with those painstaking “large work”, Yixin Tong is casually putting an orange peel near the gallery’s window, talking in the lightest way. It is exactly the footnote in the catalogue: That lightness will be what leads us to experience the profound.

Translation: Lou Yilun; Bobby Xun