

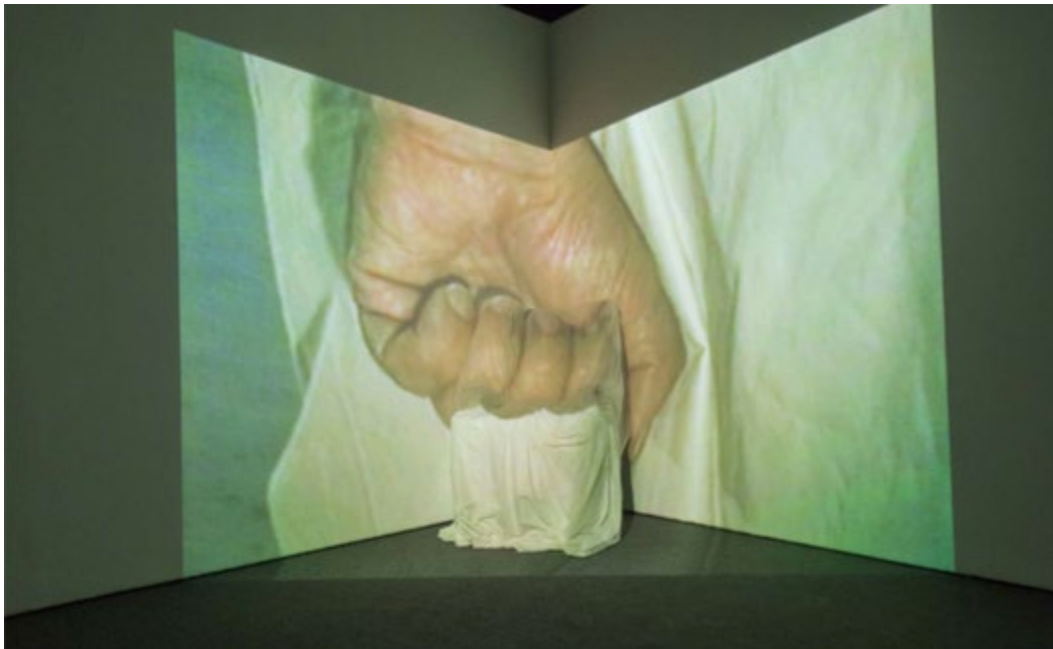
【OCAT Shanghai】 Muntadas Video Work Exhibition
Translator Muntadas: Three points about Media Scene
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Is Antonio Muntadas a translator? Of course not. He has never keenly participated in translation work of any language. Even though he has translated the sentence "attention: perception requires participation" into different languages in his work. Also, it was heard that he has personally organized a seminar in three languages. Besides, as an artist, he often visits various countries and cities.....but those examples can't persuade us to link him with a translator, which would be printed on a book page. However, this artist chooses to use "On Translation" to name most of his work. So, why is "On Translation"? It is not the type of translation which translates from one language (original version) to another language (translated version). In Muntadas's context, who is translating? What to translate? How to translate? This series of questions led the exhibition audience into a "hyper-translation" in the media scene. Therefore, we have to ask: after all, what does translation really mean?

On Translation: El aplauso is given an important display position in the exhibition. The three sets of large screens are explaining each other: screens on both sides are showing close-ups of monotonous applause of the audience. In the middle screen, applauding audience, nuclear power plants, forest fires, street violence and other images are constantly switched. We clearly know the effect of applause at the beginning and the ending of a show. Firstly, it is an act of affirmation. Secondly, it is an affirmation ritual by convention. Those applauses equal to saying "welcome" and "thank you". It is not enough or even biased to comprehend the relationship between those screens as a comparison, because there is no comparison relationship between applause and violence, the real comparison exists among the absent images and those violent images. When the collective action of applauding is juxtaposed with switching violent images, the artist is trying to mislead the attention and replace images. The issue is not as simple as the artist criticizing the violence, but more like a reflection of our acceptance range: can we accept peacefully all the images and information which are coming from the media broadcast?

Applause as a collective unconsciousness, links the encouraging and violent images together, constituting a contextual outcome at the literary level. Like dealing with language, here images are regarded as words. The relationship between images is regarded as sentences receiving influence from the context. It is worth to mention that, Muntadas deliberately ambushed the reminder of the context in works exhibited in these two exhibition halls. In the works *Transcultural Television* and *Subsensory Experience, Actions and Activities*, there are Chinese and English phrases "CONTEXTUALIZED FOR CHINA / 中国情境化" flashed separately. "Contextualized" cites to the relationship with the above and the following text at the literary level, referring to the contextualization of reality and media, information and perception. The artist reminds the Chinese audience that they can watch and read based on their context. Of course, we can interpret this reminder as a question. Answering to the media scene which revealed by Muntadas, how is the context in China?



Television was introduced to China at the end of the 1950s, but the real development began at the end of the 1970s. Although compared with the foreign countries its development was late, as soon as it entered China, it was rapidly applied in the dominated step within the political economic system and geopolitics policies. The French philosopher Bernard Stigler pointed out that television would be used in achieving the political and economic tasks as a dominated step at the end of the 20th century. In other words, using the power of images to achieve unity. The most symbolical event was happened in July 21st, 1969: the global television live steaming of Armstrong landing on the moon. Stigler calls it "Eucharist" under the global system brought by the technology and media. Therefore, Muntadas regards translation as an approach to analyze contextualization, and also a carrier of deconstructing unification. These are the two points I want to emphasize about the media scene.

In the work *Transculture Television*, the artist through the television presents directly the media production situation of global politics, culture, economics, religions and so on.

According to Muntadas's own words, he shows a media editing chain including "photographer, resident reporter, satellites, video editors, presenters, announcers, audience who record the videos, video editors, and you as viewers". Through re-editing various countries TV program material, Muntadas presents the television tricks (which are not clever) in the global system: on the one hand, television participates into the geopolitics policy system construction in every country; on the other hand, along with its technology and media feature, television constructs a trans-culture and global united media scene. It is like an enormous parasitic network. Television manifests itself in our life modality through externalization. As Muntadas said, we are living in a translated world.

Translation is one kind of "being translated". It is the third point I want to mention regarding media scene. Translation, in other words, is a translation towards "being translated" from Muntadas's point of view. The series of *On Translation: Fear* is using the immigration issue to reveal "being translated", or being regulated, or being constructed. The phrase "On Translation" marks Muntadas's working processing and methodology. During the process, translation never stops. Compared with the 70s and 80s in the last century, nowadays television and the internet are becoming correlated. Media scene shifts from the backstage editing to the database algorithm. The unity of "being translated" is intensifying. The fear is constructed; the consciousness is translated, or re-translated, or turns to a diverged and polyphonic translation, becoming a pure action. This action aligns with what Benjamin said about the task of a translator that transferring the untranslatable one and re-coordinating with the overall language. As the Swiss scholar Vincent Kaufmann's comment on situationist at that time, Muntadas is also "the pure angel in the era of cathode ray tube": when books are going to end in the media scene, through the translation and reading to re-activate and recover audience's perception towards untranslatable and invisible ones, and to retrieve back time from the lostness of existence.