

【Kaleidoscope 亚洲】创刊号 | 李然

李然 Li Ran

文：何锐安 by Ho Rui An

KALEIDOSCOPE
亚洲 ASIA
VISUAL CULTURE NOW 当下视觉文化

ANG FUDONG
The Solace
Beauty
杨福东

UTOPIA
乌托邦
敌托邦
DYSTOPIA

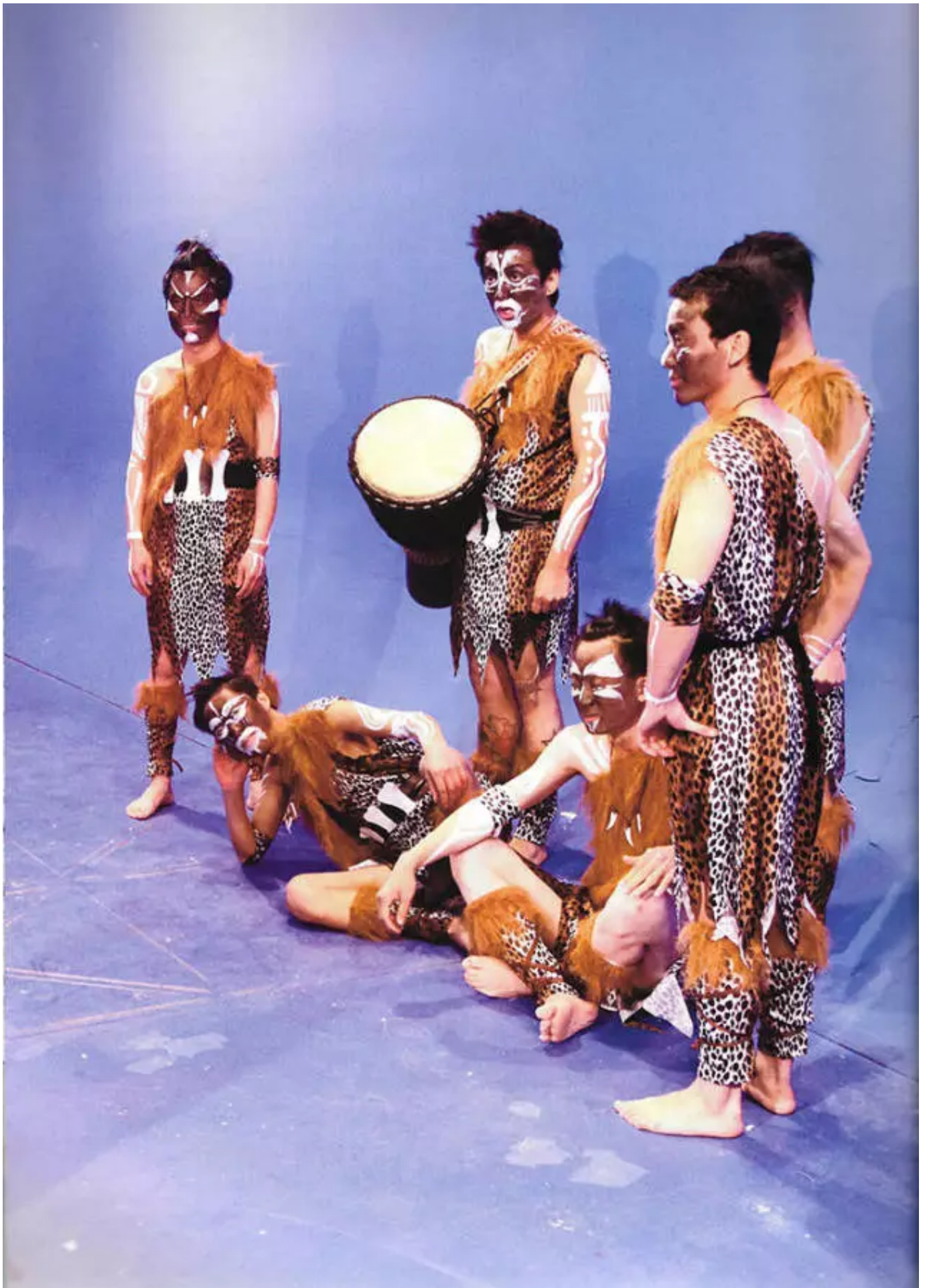
AND FEATURING
Chen Tianzhuo 陈天灼
Hajime Sorayama 空山基
Timur Si-Qin 铁木尔·斯琴
Ming Wong 黄汉明
Takuro Kuwata 桑田卓郎
Guan Xiao 关小

LAUNCH
SUE
刊号
2015

9 772038 480000

CNY 110
SGD 22
HKD 140
JPY 2500
USD 18
EUR 10





Will the specter of modernism ever take its leave? Far from announcing the completion, if not the exhaustion, of the modern project, postmodernism and its varied inflections—antimodernism, the altermodern, the off-modern—seem to have only preserved modernism as a ghostly afterlife that rebounds, poltergeist-like, with each successive attempt at exorcising it.

For the Chinese artist Li Ran, however, no anxieties are harbored towards this lingering ghost. His project is neither that of a ritual purge nor a steadfast recovery, but rather of a skittish flirtation with the null object he takes modernism to be. Working across performance, video and installation, Li invokes the names of such masters as Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso and Mondrian in a register that is ostensibly parodic, except that the target here is not so much ridiculed as merely taken as a device for play. For Li, the histories and reference points of Western modernism are instituted, arbitrary markings against which he choreographs his schizo-modern dance. His curiosity towards the modernist legacy, in this sense, lies not so much in the referent as in the critical distances at play. He operates in the gaps that open up with each incursion and recursion of the modern project, in the spaces of dismeasure that are also spaces of freedom, experimentation and fiction-making.

We see this logic at its most developed in Li's performance and video pieces, which often involve the artist playing a myriad of characters. His signature move is that of remake and dub. In *Another Modern Artist* (2013), a video presented as part of the aforementioned installation, for instance, he plays a Chinese modern artist coming to grips with his Western influences. Notably, the

Li Ran
(Chinese, b. 1986) lives
and works in Beijing.
He is represented by
Magieian Space,
Beijing, and
Aike-Dollarco, Shanghai.

Ho Rui An
is an artist and writer
who lives and works
in New York and
Singapore.

Image:
Beyond Geography, 2012
Courtesy of the artist
and Aike-Dollarco,
Shanghai.

natural voice of the protagonist has been dubbed over by a baroque, overly inflected voice reminiscent of those heard in imported foreign films dubbed in Mandarin. The grain of the voice here is peculiar, seeming to defy cultural designation. It belongs to neither of the cultures it mediates; it is the mark of their incommensurability.

Some of Li's works are more consciously parodic. Such is the case with *Beyond Geography* (2012), a mockumentary of the famous Discovery series by the BBC that features Li's usual stilted dubbing. In it, Li plays an intrepid travel host who ventures into the wilderness in search of a certain ancient Shynna Babahajarro tribe. In an amusing mix of Indiana Jones-style gallantry and touristic zeal, the host treks through the punishing terrain, sampling river water and evading imagined cannibals along the way, before finally discovering the secret tribe and gamely joining in their rituals. But there's a catch: the filming is all done against an empty blue screen studio, thus stripping down the entire documentary to its bare staging. Documentary, in one stroke, becomes theater. In one telling sequence, the host points to the empty walls as he speaks effusively about the invisible cave paintings, comparing them to works by Picasso, Gauguin and Pollock. It is an echo of the primitivist thinking that informed modernist discourse, which through its fetishization of cultural contact obscured the power differentials at play. But as with most of Li's works, the role of parody here is not simply to mock its subject but to toy with it at arm's length. There is no urgency to correct a wrong. The misunderstood, the mistranslated and the miscast are all a part of a charade that transforms any incongruity into the basis for humor. ☉

“A SCHIZO-MODERN DANCE AGAINST THE ARBITRARY HISTORIES OF WESTERN MODERNISM”

HIGHLIGHTS 亮点

Far from announcing the completion, if not the exhaustion, of the modern project, postmodernism and its varied inflections—antimodernism, the altermodern, the off-modern—seem to have only preserved modernism as a ghostly afterlife that rebounds, poltergeist-like, with each successive attempt at exorcising it.

For the Chinese artist Li Ran, however, no anxieties are harbored towards this lingering ghost. His project is neither that of a ritual purge nor a steadfast recovery, but rather of a skittish flirtation with the null object he takes modernism to be. Working across performance, video and installation, Li invokes the names of such masters as Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso and Mondrian in a register that is ostensibly parodic, except that the target here is not so much ridiculed as merely taken as a device for play. For Li, the histories and reference points of Western modernism are instituted, arbitrary markings against which he choreographs his schizo-modern dance. His curiosity towards the modernist legacy, in this sense, lies not so much in the referent as in the critical distances at play. He operates in the gaps that open up with each incursion and recursion of the modern project, in the spaces of dismeasure that are also spaces of freedom, experimentation and fiction-making.

We see this logic at its most developed in Li's performance and video pieces, which often involve the artist playing a myriad of characters. His signature move is that of remake and dub. In *Another Modern Artist* (2013), a video presented as part of the aforementioned installation, for instance, he plays a Chinese modern artist coming to grips with his Western influences. Notably, the

(Chinese, b.
and works i
He is repres
Magician
Beijing
Aike-Dellarec

Ho Ru
is an artist s
who lives a
in New Yo
Singap

Imag
Beyond Geogr
Courtesy of
and Aike-I
Shang

Ran
(b. 1986) lives
in Beijing.
Presented by
in Space,
ing, and
co, Shanghai.

Hui An
; and writer
and works
York and
apore.

Age:
graphy, 2012
of the artist
-Dellarco,
anghai.

natural voice of the protagonist has been dubbed over by a baroque, overly inflected voice reminiscent of those heard in imported foreign films dubbed in Mandarin. The grain of the voice here is peculiar, seeming to defy cultural designation. It belongs to neither of the cultures it mediates; it is the mark of their incommensurability.

Some of Li's works are more consciously parodic. Such is the case with *Beyond Geography* (2012), a mockumentary of the famous Discovery series by the BBC that features Li's usual stilted dubbing. In it, Li plays an intrepid travel host who ventures into the wilderness in search of a certain ancient Shynna Babahajarro tribe. In an amusing mix of Indiana Jones-style gallantry and touristic zeal, the host treks through the punishing terrain, sampling river water and evading imagined cannibals along the way, before finally discovering the secret tribe and gamely joining in their rituals. But there's a catch: the filming is all done against an empty blue screen studio, thus stripping down the entire documentary to its bare staging. Documentary, in one stroke, becomes theater. In one telling sequence, the host points to the empty walls as he speaks effusively about the invisible cave paintings, comparing them to works by Picasso, Gauguin and Pollock. It is an echo of the primitivist thinking that informed modernist discourse, which through its fetishization of cultural contact obscured the power differentials at play. But as with most of Li's works, the role of parody here is not simply to mock its subject but to toy with it at arm's length. There is no urgency to correct a wrong. The misunderstood, the mistranslated and the miscast are all a part of a charade that transforms any incongruity into the basis for humor. ◉

李然



现代主义的幽灵终将会离去吗？事实上，远未到宣告现代终结（如果并非枯竭）的时刻，随着每一次驱除现代主义的尝试，后现代主义及其繁多的变化形式——反现代主义，另现代（alter-modern），闭现代（off-modern）——看起来却似乎仅仅是让现代主义恶作剧幽灵般地复生。

然而，中国艺术家李然并未对这徘徊不去的幽灵感到焦虑。他的项目既非某种净化仪式，也非对于复生的执着，而是某种轻佻的挑逗——他将现代主义看做“空对象”。通过表演、影像和装置，李然将一系列大师之名——塞尚、马蒂斯、毕加索和蒙德里安——置于了一个看似恶搞的语境，但其目的与其说是嘲弄，更像是仅仅作作为一种表演的策略。

对于李然来说，西方现代主义的历史及其参照点的设立与标记，是任意而武断的，是与他编排其“分裂的现代”之舞的方式相对立的。从这个意义上来说，他对于现代主义传统的好奇，更多存在于表演的批判性距离中，而非在这些参照物之中。他在随着现代性项目的每一次入侵与循环而打开的裂缝，以及，在不可测量的，同时也是自由、实验和虚构的空间中工作。

我们在李然的表演和影像中看到的这一得到了最大程度发展的逻辑，在其作品中，艺术家常常扮演五花八门的各种角色。他的标志性动作是重制与配音。视频《另一个现代艺术家》作为《另一个“他者的故事”》的一部分呈现，在其中，李然扮演了一位试图去掌握西方影响的中国现代艺术家。值得注意的是，主角的原本的声音被早期进口译制片中的夸张配音所取代。在这里，声音起到了特殊的作用，像是对文化专制的挑战。它并不属于各自语言所代表的任何一种文化，而是标记了他们之间的不可通约性。

李然的一些作品是更加有意的戏仿。这样的例子有《地理之外》（2012）——一部模仿BBC著名系列纪录片《Discovery》的假纪录片，其中夸张造作的配音是李然惯常的创作方式。在片中，李然扮演了一名无畏的旅行节目主持人，踏上在蛮荒地帯寻找某个古老的“Shynna Babahajarro”部落的旅程。怀着极大的旅行热情，混合了印第安纳与大卫·琼斯式勇士风格的主持人在严酷的地理环境中艰难跋涉，取样河水，回避着想象中的食人族，最终找到了这个神秘的部落并加入他们的仪式。但其中有一个隐情：这部影片完全是在一个空无一物的蓝幕影棚内拍摄的，因此，整部纪录片的内容被剥离而仅剩光秃秃的布景。瞬间，纪录片成为剧场。根据安排好的序列，主持人指着没有任何内容的墙壁热情洋溢地谈论着无形的洞穴壁画，并将之与毕加索、高更和波洛克的作品相比较。这是对现代主义话语中的原始主义思潮的回应，通过对文化联系的盲目迷恋而掩盖其权力差异。但在李然的多数作品中，戏仿的作用并非对其主题简单模仿，而是某种保持一定距离的玩弄。这里并没有纠正错误的紧迫性。误解、错译和错位的角色都是猜字游戏的一部分，将任何不协调都转变为幽默的基底。