

Zeng Hong

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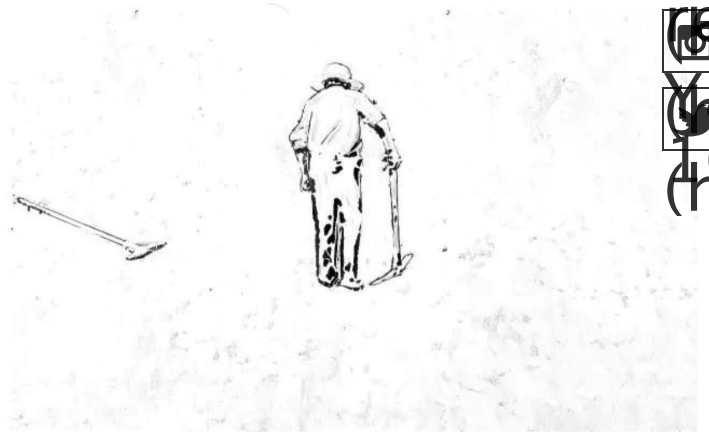
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[Media Report] Zeng Hong | The Man with the Straw Hat and The Robust Woman

By Zeng Hong 2016



“The man with the straw hat” and “the robust woman” are characters from my video project Key-Frame Extraction, which documents the monotonous motions of people situated in isolated environments. These highly repetitive movements focus our imagination onto the day-to-day gestures of near banality. At the same time, they can also be regarded as gestures of a rehearsal that works in preparation for future events—what potentially might arrive in a time-to-come.

Biopolitics disciplines and shapes the body of the human; the individual’s daily movements can be regarded as regulated and maintained through practice. At critical points, these gestures emerge through and as labor, bodybuilding, the routine of going to and from work. The list goes on; I would even include housework. Almost all of these originate in the regulation and disciplinary actions of and on the body.

My imagination of these daily gestures relies first and foremost on the level of the image.

The tool-holding individual, extracted from his environment, pictorially presents to us movements with neither definitive referents nor predictable outcomes. At this juncture, the posturing of these movements and its implied significance becomes dependent on the strength of the image to extend infinitely. From this perspective, these movements are analogous to a rehearsal for future events in the making.

Gestures yet to arrive relate back to the individual. I consider the gestures that are about to go out-of-hand. They originate from and as reactions to control. They emerge precisely as a feedback to that repression. This resistance, coming from the lone body, is nevertheless a most thorough form, because the individual has no collective to rely on or escape to.

Across the spectrum of movements belonging to these two peoples, I extracted one minute of key frames for each. The frozen movements in their respective degrees of difference, display gentleness, or ferocity. By using hand-painted propylene, repeated scanning, and multiple-print methods, eventually the character becomes detached from his concrete environment. What remains present is but the fragments of lonesome gestures.

Realism is now understood as but a stale aesthetic project with propagandistic proclamations and slogans. Our contemporary understandings are informed by insight into the historical question of ideology. Once the reality that we know become something else, the significance of realism at the level of aesthetics becomes the opposite of what it once was. Just as we have never really lived in the real conditions of socialism, this situation requires constant revision. (Translated by Zou Zhao)

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