

Li Jingxiong talks about“Making Transcendents On Demand”

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Li Jingxiong, "Making Transcendents On Demand", 2019

Li Jingxiong's two sets of paintings and a set of video installations presented at the HdM Gallery's Beijing Space's solo exhibition "Making Transcendents On Demand", namely, the artist selected Xiu Xian (Making Transcendents) Literature, Gene-editing infant, Hacker technology of face changing and Shanzhai Culture as background to explore the form of capital. The artist critically misappropriated the popular IP, on-focus event, brand and celebrity image, and transformed the entertainment and controversy touched by his creation into a channel of communication with the public. The exhibition will last until September 28.

The three sets of works exhibited on the "Making Transcendents On Demand" are all about events with timeliness and have been irritating to me in the past two years. My thoughts and practices can only cover the class to which I belong, or those who are close to my

personal concerns. The so-called similarity is not necessarily the nationality, education level or wealth possession. It may be just a certain temperament. We seem to be forming hyper-collectivism: individuals are not consciously subordinate to the collective, and the collective itself does not consciously move toward the promotion of personal interests; but people are trying to work with a larger system and make connections to the system then give meaning to their lives. The reason for constant change in my creative direction may be that I have always swayed between private expression and the public domain, but I don't think it is weak, actually it's realistic.

The term "on demand" is generally used in print-on-demand printing in the publishing industry, video on demand (VOD) and gaming on demand in the online environment. I use this term mostly because of what it refers to, the substitutability and liquidity do not point to on-demand content, but to the system behind it. In other words, the "god aura" and capital and symbols written in the press release are just a metaphor for talking about an already very old topic. The concept created by an artist can be recognized as a means of legalizing its creation, and the creation itself is closer to some sort of illegal impulse.

I am personally very interested in popular culture and have a positive attitude. Taking online literature as an example, the entire Xiuxian culture industry—from novels and games to film and television dramas—has far exceeded the imagination of elites, especially intellectuals. As for the misappropriation of these commercial IPs, I feel that it just reflects the beauty of the art system or the premise: this is a reflective cultural system. The working conditions of many artists today make them look like subculture recorders—capturing some subcultures and elevating themselves through this subculture and its groups. However, I believe that the lack of reflective work cannot fully support the existence of art.

To a certain extent, the series of works bearing the symbol of cultivation in the exhibition ("Battle Through the Heavens ", " A Record of a Mortal's Journey to Immortality/Loop ", "Xian", etc., were all created in 2019). Xu Bing inspired the defamiliarization of the text. It is my goal to shape the aesthetic structure of religion. When making these works, I hope they can be recognized even from a hundred meters away, just like the brand logo of OFFWHITE. At the same time, the material I chose is a kind of knowledge itself. It contains a large amount of information and is a result of the mutual game between political, economic and technological conditions. This is not to say that the materials I use are very special, but the choice of materials is inherently inevitable. This inevitability is manifested by the objective

conditions of creation.

The video section of "Hyperfake" calculates and synthesizes Andy Lau in celebrity talk show with my own image. This hacker face-changing tool deepfacelab was found on a porn website forum, as GitHub has been banned the download and maintenance of such open source programs. It took about 6 months to produce the work. One week after the opening of the exhibition, a quick face-changing software called ZAO burst into popular. I think that face-changing technology is a kind of anti-phagic system about celebrities, a form of resistance that everyone can achieve: the influence exerted by celebrities on ordinary audiences is one-sided on the surface, but ordinary people can now manipulate their images through technology. The image of the celebrity directly resists or dissolves the one-way influence. From another perspective, I think the image of celebrities are too innocent sometimes. For example, Andy Lau, in addition to the hidden marriage incident, is the perfect embodiment of Hong Kong and even the Chinese spirit. I want the star to perform some less naive, embarrassing things which worth thinking about in the video.

The other part of "Hyperfake" consists of the copycat YEEZY shoes. Many years ago, I was wanting to start my own sneaker brand which had nothing to do with the art practice. Then I learned about the insider systems of the advanced copycat industry in Putian from the friends introduced by Chen Yujun, who was born there. Whether it is original or copycat, a certain cultural symbol will definitely mean some kind of resistance when it first appears: if someone are dissatisfied with the existing cultural options, but people don't have or are not able to create other options, they will choose to apply this demand into a certain celebrity or brand, thereby reducing the cost of communication between each other and stabilizing their respective classes. Ironically, Yeezy Season 3 used an old photo of the Rwandan slaughter to make the invitation letter, and because of this action people praised Yeezy as a brand with soul and art. The absurdity is self-evident. The cultural symbols I talked about are not only specific celebrities or brands, but also the punk movement in the 1970s, the Japanese otaku culture, the luxury consumption culture, the Chinese Xiuxian pop culture, and so on. They eventually become a consumable product through celebrity endorsements or brand promoting.

I invited the philosopher Zhang Jiarong to participate in the writing of the lines of the video. In order to observe other people's reactions to certain opinions, Jia Rong will deliberately say some points that even disagreed by himself. We used to discuss the concept of

“excessive recognition”: I completely agree with everything you say, even if my own point of view is not like this; in this way, the absurdity becomes obvious for the onlookers. I don't think it is necessary for an artist to act as a completely correct person, but artist can play a person who deliberately speaks bad things, mad words and be an anti-speaker.

— Written/Interviewed/
Miao Zijin