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Flattened Metal
Guan Xiao
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Acknowledgement 鸣谢
Foreword

From the moment I first met Guan Xiao in Hong Kong, at an exhibition press conference, tucked away at the back of the room, I knew I was meeting one of the next generation of young Chinese artists. Guan is an extraordinary individual who, for me at least, has come to epitomise the more globally-orientated artists presently emerging from China. She is a marker of a new generation. Guan is already entrenched, not only in a transnational culture, but, like many of her contemporaries around the world, in an environment immersed in new technologies. She is a product of a life spent perpetually online, a familiar world to anyone holding a smart phone. In her work, one finds a compression of past and present, a synthesis of cultural identities brought together as though catapulted into the gallery as a result of a random search engine. But it is this fusion of what appears unrelated, yet so conscientiously brought together by the artist that compels us to move from one work to the next, in this her first major solo-exhibition in the UK.

Throughout Guan’s work, and her mixing of the kind of objects one expects to find in a museum combined with snippets of philosophical texts or backdrops that are the digital equivalent of dazzle camouflage, is a sense of not letting go of values associated with beauty and tradition. By inserting historic objects into a blizzard of online imagery she reveals the fragility of a world where everything stands for an empty vessel of meaning. Mindful of our technologically-driven present, she brings together a range of emotions that tap into our inner desire to make sense of a world in which we feel increasingly displaced. At no point in time, especially in Beijing, has urban development been more sweeping and less discerning about what it sweeps away. As a consequence, the idea that objects and histories can resist the fluidity and slipperiness of the new order, falls far from view, leaving Guan’s high-tech scenery as remnants of an age that we instinctively recognise as our own.

Thanks and congratulations to Guan Xiao, least of all for producing an exhibition and a newborn child at one and the same time. Thanks to Katharine Stout (ICA Head of Programme) for working so well with Guan during this period, also members of the ICA team, including Zeyad Dajani and Karen Turner, as well as the Arts Council England whose support we gratefully acknowledge. Thanks to Adrian Cheng for this incredible opportunity to work again with the K11 Art Foundation (KAF), which has enabled a series of new commissions and partnerships at the ICA. Thanks to Carmen Ho, Douglas Kotwall and William Zhao, whose support of our KAF relationship is greatly appreciated. I would also like to extend a very special thanks to the Guan Xiao Supporters Group, Joyce Liu, Antenna Space, Shanghai, Bruno Wang & Pure Land Foundation, and Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin.
前言

我第一次和关小见面，是在香港一个展览的媒体发佈会上，我们躲在会场后方的一角；打从那一刻开始，我已经知道我面前的是其中一位新一代的年轻中国艺术家。关小十分与众不同（至少我觉得如此），她已渐渐成为当今日趋国际化的中国新进艺术家的缩影。关小是新一代的标记，她不单早已扎根于跨国文化当中，也像她在国际间的同侪一样，浸淫在满载新科技的环境中。她是持续地在线生活的产物，这种生活是智能手机一族所熟悉的世界。在她的作品中，可见压缩了的过去和将来，不同的文化身分结合起来，又随着某个搜索引擎而瞬间跃进艺廊当中。但正正因为艺术家本人一丝不苟地，把这些看来互不相关的也融合起来，驱使我们走过一件又一件作品——我说的是关小于英国的首个个人展览。

关小混合人们预期会在博物馆才找到的物件，再配合哲学文本的选段或背景板，看来俨如电子版的“眩晕迷彩”；她的作品总是对美感和传统的价值不离不弃。关小透过把具有历史感的物件放诸于纷陈的网上视像素材上，表达万事万物的意义皆空洞乏味，反映世界的脆弱。仔细现今以科技为先的社会，关小在作品中呈现一系列的情感，发掘出我们内心渴望理解这个教我们越加觉得流离失所的世界。特别在北京，都市发展正史无前例地抹走一切，同时却并不计较被抹去什么，人们一直以为物件和历史可抵御流动和有漏洞的新秩序，但最终却无能为力；关小的高科技景象，因而成为我们本能地认同为我们这一代的遗产。

我很感激关小，并在此祝贺她——成功“生产”了这个展览，以及在同一时间“生产”了一个初生婴孩。多谢 Katharine Stout 小姐（伦敦当代艺术学院的节目总监）在筹备展览期间和关小合作无间，还有整个伦敦当代艺术学院的团队，包括 Zeyad Dajani 先生和 Karen Turner 小姐，不得不提的还有英国艺术协会的慷慨支持。我很感激郑志刚先生让我们有这个难得的机会跟 K11 Art Foundation (KAF) 再度合作。我也感谢何宝荣小姐、葛德麟先生及赵令勇先生，对我们与 KAF 的合作给予无限支持。我很感激关小展览支持者团体、Joyce Liu 小姐、上海天线空间、Bruno Wang 先生和 Pure Land Foundation，以及柏林 Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler 画廊。

Gregor Muir
Executive Director, ICA, London
伦敦当代艺术学院执行董事
The K11 Art Foundation (KAF) is committed to promoting the development of Chinese contemporary art, locally, regionally and internationally. The comprehensive approach undertaken by our non-profit foundation has thus far built valuable bridges between international museums and organisations in innovative new ways. With a core mission to support young and emerging Chinese artists, KAF provides a global platform to connect art with the public, through initiatives at home as well as pioneering contemporary art projects abroad.

It is within this framework that KAF continues its collaboration with the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London. The inaugural partnership in October 2015, presenting Zhang Ding’s Enter the Dragon, received critical acclaim, which has extended to our second exhibition together, solo exhibition of Guan Xiao, Flattened Metal, curated by internationally established curator Katharine Stout, Head of Programme at ICA. This thoughtful engagement enables cross-pollination between the curator and the artist, fostering new thoughts, ideas and research that stand to enhance the growth of the artist’s practice. This holistic vision central to KAF’s ongoing programme underpins the commitment of the foundation to broadening the horizons of contemporary art from China.

Encompassing a video triptych and five new installations in the exhibition, Guan Xiao explores how ways of seeing are now influenced by the mass dissemination of digital image, as an increasingly dominant source of information exchange. Her work is concerned with our understanding of the past, and how new media prompt stimulating dialogues in the present. Offering fresh perspectives on the way we perceive the world, juxtaposing old and new, known and unknown, primitive and digital based on a universal language that transcends binary boundaries, are touchstones of her practice.

At KAF, we are excited to partner with ICA in presenting such a unique and original exhibition by Guan Xiao. Rooted in our shared mission and values, this second collaboration further encourages an exchange of knowledge which is fundamental to the infrastructure required to support the growing contemporary art scene in Asia. To that end, we look forward to welcoming the exhibition to China this autumn, where Guan Xiao’s works will be presented alongside those by French artist Neil Beloufa at the chi K11 art museum, Shanghai. Jointly curated by Katharine Stout and independent young Chinese curator Victor Wang for Beloufa’s oeuvre, the multi-disciplinary and multi-faceted programme will continue to nourish a dynamic circulation of ideas. We hope that this extraordinary network of experiences will be testament to KAF’s dedication to nurturing artists as well as curators, and promotion of artistic knowledge at every level of the contemporary art landscape.
前言

K11 Art Foundation（KAF）致力于推动本地、地区性及国际当代艺术的发展。作为非牟利机构，我们策划了丰富的活动，以革新的形式与国际博物馆及不同机构，建构富有价值的桥梁。KAF秉承着支持年青及新进中国艺术家的核心使命，透过本地及海外先锋性的当代艺术项目，提供一个国际平台让艺术与公众连繫。

正因如此，KAF继续与伦敦当代艺术学院（ICA）合作。我们的首次合作于2015年10月，呈献了张鼎的“龙争虎斗”，获得各界的广泛好评。作为延续，今次再次携手举办关小的个人展览“扁平金属”。展览由伦敦当代艺术学院项目总监、策展人Katharine Stout策展。这样不仅让艺术家获得海外展览的机会，亦同时让策展人和艺术家有更多相互得益的沟通，启发新意念、创意和研究，进一步推动艺术家的艺术实践。如此全面的愿景是KAF一系列展览的核心，见证其扩阔中国当代艺术视野的承诺。

是次展览展出一件三屏视像作品和五件全新创作的装置。关小的作品主要探讨在讯息交流已逐渐为数码影像主导的时代，观看的方式是如何被影响的。她的作品与我们对过去的理解，以及新媒体如何驱动当下的对话紧密相关。开拓理解世界的新鲜视角，以超越界线的共通语言为基础，融合古老与新颖、已知与未知、原始与数码，这些都是关小作品的试金石。

KAF很荣幸再次有机会与ICA合作，联合呈献关小这个如此特别和原创的展览。基于我们共同的使命和价值观，第二次合作将继续鼓励知识的交流，巩固及支持亚洲当代艺术。为此，我们亦期待今年秋天将这个展览带到中国，关小与法国艺术家Neil Beloufa的作品将同时在上海chi K11美术馆展出。中国年轻的独立策展人王宗孚（Victor Wang）曾为Beloufa展览策展，是次展览将由他与Katharine Stout共同策划，跨学科、多层面的项目将持续培养艺术创意的活跃交流。我们希望这些难得的集体经验，能够作为KAF致力培育艺术家及策展人，以及在各个艺术领域的层面上推广艺术知识的重要见证。
In sculptures, videos and installations, Guan Xiao expands the aesthetic and cognitive possibilities for how meanings and identities are assigned and understood. Without seeking to fix definitions, her work investigates our incomprehension of the past, and the way in which the unknown gives rise to intriguing discussion in the present. Guan juxtaposes references from the past and present (or near future), weaving together both appropriated and originated visual and audio material, digital rendering techniques and objects to create evocative installations that integrate so-called primitive and modern elements. Guan comments, “Generally speaking, I understand my practice as exploring the logic by which things relate to each other or, in other words, the way in which human beings live in the world. While this unfolds in a myriad of ways, in different projects I’ve previously focused on the notion of equivalence and core sampling, for instance. For the presentation at the ICA, what really concerns me is the condition of conversation.”

For her exhibition at the ICA, London Guan Xiao presents a series of large new, interrelated works in which mesh fabric printed screens form a back drop for sculptural assemblages made of objects appropriated from sources ranging from ancient museum artefacts to high tech sports gear. As with previous works such as *Documentary: Geocentric Puncture*, 2012 and *Documentary: From National Geographic to BBC*, 2015, Guan optically merges the colour spectrum for the screens with the tonal range of the customised objects placed in front. The repetitive patterns printed on the screen are often taken from natural camouflaging phenomena such as animal or snake skins that are also reproduced artificially for fashion, which in the new works are combined with images sourced from news or social documentaries.

Just as Guan is interested in finding formal equivalences between the second and third dimensions, she also explores the interdependent connections and flow between different ways of understanding the world and our place within it. Together, this series of works highlight how our understanding of one thing is always in relation to another – sometimes in rational ways, sometimes not. For the first time, Guan includes quotations from other writers on the printed screens, such as the British anthropologist and systems theorist Gregory Bateson (1904 - 1980) who embraced psychology, behavioural biology, and cybernetics to develop a theoretical synthesis that he referred to as “an ecology of mind.” Bateson’s statement, “When we think of coconuts or pigs, there are no coconuts or pigs in the brain” is quoted on the first work you encounter in the exhibition, *Public Chair*, 2016.

Throughout her practice, Guan Xiao explores how present ways of seeing are influenced by digital image and information circulation, which have become an increasingly dominant source of knowledge exchange. The show also includes a recent video triptych, *Action*, 2014, which suggests open and fluid connections between sound, image and text as video clips sourced from a range of online sources including home movies, advertising and promotional videos are rhythmically juxtaposed across the three screens. Guan Xiao comments on this piece, “For me, rhythm means all the intersections of sense. It’s a way I understand the associations between things. It helps me to try and transfer action, to see, to listen, and to think about interactions and freely build a link between them.”
策展人语

关小透过其雕塑、视像和装置作品，就如何赋予及理解意义和身分，开拓美学和认知上的可能性。她没有寻找故有的定义，反之在作品中探讨我们对过去的不惑，以及此未知数所诱发出对于当下的有趣讨论。关小把过去的素材，与当下（或不远的未来）并列起来，再把挪用并重新创造出的视听素材、数码绘画技巧及真实物件交织在一起，创作出一系列包含所谓“原始”和“现代”元素的装置作品，启发情感和思维。关小表示：“一般而言，我的创作专注于探索事物关连起来的逻辑，换言之，就是研究人类如何在世上活着; 纵然方式及逻辑迥异，但我在过往不同的项目也专注在不同的范畴，例如探讨对等的概念、对事物‘鑽芯取样’等。在伦敦当代艺术学院的展览中，真正让我关注的却是‘对话’这个概念。”

在伦敦当代艺术学院的展览中，关小呈现一系列大型的新作，每件作品均息息相关——一幅一幅数码打印背景网布前，放置着一组一组由不同物料拼凑而成的雕塑，素材多样由博物馆级的远古文物到高科技运动器材均备。关小在她的旧作《纪录片：地心穿刺》（2012）和《纪录片：从国家地理到 BBC》（2015）中，把背景布上展现色彩光谱，前置色系相配的选材与之互相融合。背景布上重复的图案主要取材自大自然的天然保护色，如动物毛皮或蛇纹等，它们也经常被人工複製到时尚的衣饰上。关小在她的新作中，则融合从新闻或社会文献捏取的图像。

关小喜欢发掘第二与第三维度之间的等同元素，她也探求各种理解世界的方法之间的相互关系和流动性，以及我们在其中所处的位置。把两者合拼起来，这新一系列作品则阐述我们如何理解一件事情，是会联繫到另一件事情当中——时而理性，时而相反。今次，关小首度将其他作家的文章选段印在背景画上，包括英国人类学家及系统理论学家葛雷格里·贝特森（Gregory Bateson, 1904 - 1980）的名句。贝特森的理论学说涉猎到心理学、行为生物学，以及人工头脑学发展出来的一套被称为“思想生态”的系统理论。他曾说：“当我们想到椰子或猪时，我们脑袋裡其实并没有椰子或猪。”这一句话就出现在关小这个展览甫进场即见的第一件作品——《公共椅子》（2016）。

数码影像及资讯流通逐渐成为知识交流主要的源头，关小就在她的作品中，探讨现今人们观看的模式如何被此状况影响着。是次展览也会展出关小近年的三屏视像作品——《行动》（2014）。作品通过有节奏地并排三个萤光幕、展示一系列从网上搜集得来的视像素材，包括家庭电影、广告片段和推广视频等，展现声音、影像与文字之间既开放又流动的关係。关小谈到这个作品：“于我来说，节奏等于感官的所有交汇点; 节奏帮助我了解事物之间的关係，让我尝试去转移行为，去看、去听、去想、去思考不同的互动，並自由地在其中建構关聯。”

Katharine Stout
Head of Programme, ICA, London
伦敦当代艺术学院项目总监
Public Chair

2016
Resin, artificial plants, acrylic, speaker, C-stand and mesh fabric
Courtesy of the artist, Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin and Antenna Space, Shanghai
When we think of coconuts or pigs, there are no coconuts or pigs in the brain.

After fox from monkeys and birds until to mosquitoes.
Amazon Gold

2016
Fibreglass, resin, plaster, acrylic, speaker, C-stand and mesh fabric
Courtesy of the artist, Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin and Antenna Space, Shanghai
Little Drum
2016
Resin, metal, glass, light bulb, acrylic, C-stand and mesh fabric
Courtesy of the artist, Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin and Antenna Space, Shanghai
Marble Floor

2016
Resin, metal, acrylic, C-stand and mesh fabric

Courtesy of the artist, Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin and Antenna Space, Shanghai.
SIZE IS JUST RIGHT
From Unit 3 to Unit 7

2016
Resin, stainless steel, MDF, acrylic, speaker, C-stand and mesh fabric

Courtesy of the artist, Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin and Antenna Space, Shanghai
Action
2014
Single channel HD video in 3 screens, 10 minutes
Courtesy of the artist, Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin and Antenna Space, Shanghai
Beijing-based artist Guan Xiao has become known for a series of installations including *The Documentary: Geocentric Puncture*, in which the artist presents a compositional framework based on a photography studio: objects set against digitally enhanced backdrops with cameras pointed at them. For the ICA exhibition, she offered a more pop-tinted, installation of installations. The exhibition consisted of a number of her “sets” that included audio sound and backdrops with a series of “props” presented before them. The props included a pair of neon pink speaker phones over which an electric blue surfboard rested. They were presented before a greyscale backdrop printed on mesh screen offering a digital collage and printed texts, including: “Thank you for watching”. The exhibition was well received: it marked at once an arrival and a departure in terms of how this artist is moving through the world, processing its material information as she goes. In this interview, Guan Xiao discusses her ICA exhibition, and where her practice goes from here.

**SC:** Stephanie Bailey  
**GX:** Guan Xiao

**SC:** Let’s start by talking about the title of your recent exhibition at the ICA, *Flattened Metal* - what does this mean to you, and are titles important to you as an artist?

**GX:** In the beginning, I tried to find a title that articulates and interprets the intentions of the work in a straightforward way. But soon I realised I was trapped into my least favorite method, so I changed my perspective on the title. Metaphor is the cleverest form of rhetoric: an appropriate way to communicate. For me, “Flattened Metal” is more precise than going straight to an interpretation of the intentions. If I say a word to you, like “-ism” or “post-”, you wouldn’t understand its precise meaning if you didn’t know the background of these words. But everyone is capable of knowing what “flattened” and “metal” mean, with their different ideas and understandings of what these words mean. For me, this type of abstract perception processed by the imagination of an individual is the essence of the communicated object: the true “precision”. “Flattened Metal” has a sense of condensing and transforming complexities into a different thing, which resembles the work of visual artists who use similar traits to transform complex objects.

Titles are important for me. My installations can be described as different components - which include the titles - gathered together in a way that brings forth a backdrop that does not seem to focus on any single subject. This allows the flexibility of spectatorship: the members of the audience are themselves the consumers and agents implicated in a new scene. And they are the subjects: served by the above-mentioned context depending on their respective sensibilities.

**SC:** The sculptural installations you present in *Flattened Metal* are quite different to those you have made before, such as *The Documentary: Geocentric Puncture* (2011-2012), in which
you present composed photography studio settings, in which artefacts, such as an Easter Island Moai statue, are poised in front of brightly coloured camouflaged screens resembling snakeskin.

Could you describe the formal, compositional and material thinking that went into composing this installation in terms of the arrangement of text, screen, sound, and object? What is the significance in the number of screens, for example, and the texts and objects you chose to use, and how does the video triptych you created for the show fit in to the narrative you have composed?

GX: Through my installation works, I've been trying to describe a context, rather than prove a subject, even if they appear to exist independently. From The Documentary: Geocentric Puncture to The Documentary: From National Geographic to BBC (2015), I was influenced by the arrangements of photography studios, trying to blur the focus within the structure of the installation, compositions of elements and the range of complexities, to create multiple subjects or an absence of subject. In a photography studio, the backdrop is used for emphasising the object being photographed, and I intentionally used colourful and complex snakeskin patterns for these backgrounds, to make the objects at the front and the background equally important, with their colours, degrees of the complexity of details and importance being glued together. Although the works showing at the ICA are stylistically different, the internal lines of thoughts align to the previous practice.

The choice of colours came out of personal preference. I like images being colour-reversed in Photoshop, so I tried to approach that in the colour scheme of the show: the paleness of the metallic colours was based on those gradation options in Photoshop that reflect those digital colour inversions. Compared to previous works, for me the deliberate grey scaling and mild colour schemes I used for the ICA show are just another type of sharp contrast. I want the relationship between the installations to be fused better, with my treatment on the backdrop not only letting the installation itself be able to describe a context, but also making the space where they situate transform into a part of the context. So this time I chose a semi-transparent mesh fabric, hoping the visuals, like colour and texture, would overlap between installations, making the background, foreground and environment lighten and fuse.

SC: Is there a particular way in which you want people to relate to your works, in terms of how you condense, compress and flatten time and meaning within them?

GX: There are internal relations within the works that I experiment with. I think it’s not that people lack the abilities of imagining and perceiving, but there needs to be a gap to allow people to believe what they actually feel. Hence, for the exhibition at the ICA, I didn’t design complex relational structures between compartments; on the contrary I solely controlled the most basic elements, such as volume of the works and their positioning. How they are “to relate” to each other became an unspeakable abstract component to be returned to the audience. However, I’m still offering them “elements” or “keywords” as usual.
SC: What keywords would you say you utilised for your London show?

GX: I've retained my preference for sculptural forms, and putting two conceptually opposing objects together: ancient sculptures and modern ready-mades, limited edition art objects and endlessly reproduced public facilities, and so on. But the readers have to know that this is not my only standard of selection. After all, for me anything is a material, including concepts. For instance, this time I chose the stereo set as the main ready-made, nevertheless I don't need its speakers to function, what I need is the concept of “stereo set” and its relationship with sound. I don’t need the presence of sound here. I need people to think of any sort of sound they could have imagined when they first saw the stereo set. It is just as I treated the photography equipment, I don’t need it to actually work; I only need the concept of it and its relationship with seeing. Therefore, the words I use here are like the other components in the installations: they are just different materials of a medium. The references in the words, the meanings behind them, their contexts are not so important to me. The words and the stereo set exist as a set of conceptualisation materials, broken up from their former existence. Their literal meanings at this time become the shape of their being as materials. One thing to note is that different installations represent different word combinations and structures.

SC: One aspect of your work is the intention to reveal how - as you have said - the things we deem as new or modern are in fact ancient, too. In the case of Geocentric Puncture, for instance, we see both the camera that documents fragments of history, to the fragment itself, and the frame within which the representation is staged. In Flattened Metal, it feels like you have employed a similar approach, but instead, we are no longer in a camera studio, but in a museum - a place in which we see, for instance, a large Grecian foot - a fragment, a viewer might image, of a larger statue - as an object of monumental time.

Would you say Flattened Metal continues your exploration into the notion time as expressed through the objects that define who we are culturally and historically?

GX: My statement that “the new or modern things are also ancient in some perspective” is based on the influences on us from things such as archaeological artefacts and latest technological products may escape from the constraints of meanings due to our insufficient understanding, or unknowing, of them. Also because of unknowing, the abstract language of forms can escape its functionality into an independent narrating subject, and so full of imaginations.

How the audience understand my works must be a free and also very personal act. My works also don’t provide a standard answer. Hence what the composition and structure of my works lead you to think about is your own freedom. However, with all the materials I use, I don’t care about their references, history, the meanings behind them or their contexts; for me they exist here as conceptualised materials, broken up from their former existence. The reason why I prefer using conceptually opposed objects is not only because paradoxical, polarised things often come from the different expressions of the same perception, but also can further emphasise this fracture, and liberate things from their historical and functional meanings, and thus from taxonomy. In my work, history has
never been of my concern. For me history is a lump of recycled things in changing packages, some accumulating materials. In some ways the human race has never progressed, we keep moving in cycles, repeating ourselves. I try not to make the audience think that I’m talking about the historical values of things. Therefore, personally I don’t like the saying the “fragments of history”, on one hand if we see certain forms and think of them as the fragments of history, it’s too symbolised; on the other hand, nothing in my work is a fragment “of history”, at least not as in the meanings of what most people would think the “fragments of history” might be. They are themselves.

You asked whether “Flattened Metal” continues my exploration into the notion time as expressed through the objects that define who we are culturally and historically - I don’t necessarily agree with this. I think there’s an implication being created here, limitations created by culture and history became a deliberate discrimination, and intended to induce a value system. This means is not only too symbolised, is also an interference and abduction of perception. Besides, time for me is a measure word, a measurer. My intention has nothing to do with this measure word. At last, as the author, my works do not expressly talk about “who we are” type of identity issues.

SC: You once said your work is very much about betraying the world while being loyal to it in your own way. To this end, what advice would you give to those who wish to become artists in the future?

GX: That is a sentence by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing from “Men in the Dark Times”, as quoted by Hannah Arendt: “Always ready to betray and stand against the world, while staying loyal to it in my own way”. The last time I mentioned it was more about my attitudes towards art, rather than about the creation of works. For me, this is a mentality an artist should have. A mind that is always alert and observing the surroundings in the opposites of experience and “should-dos”, but this is not some kind of clever strategy, but a responsibility and loyalty to the self and the world.

When I first got into the art world, there was a senior who told me three sentences: 1, never do what you don’t want to do. 2, be polite. 3, see your goal, and go for it. I want to add another: As long as you hold on to it, you will have a position to yourself.
与关小对话
白怡怡

驻北京艺术家关小以一系列装置作品包括《纪录片：地心穿刺》而为人熟悉。此系列作品中，艺术家以摄影工作室作为基础呈现出具有构图感的框架：对象被设置于经数字影像优化的背景布前面，摄影机正好可以对准整件作品。在当代艺术学院的展览中，她提出了一个用色较为通俗的装置中的装置。这个展览由一系列“布景”组成，每一个都包含了音像，以及在背景布前陈设的一系列“道具”。这些道具包括一对荧光粉红色的音箱，其上横置了一块电光蓝色的滑浪板，背景是以深浅灰阶印刷的网布，呈现出数字拼贴效果以及字句诸如：“多谢观看”。

这个展览受到广泛赞赏：它标志着当艺术家在世界上游走，以及当她离开并处理对象信息的时候的抵达和出发的状态。在这个访问里，关小谈及她在当代艺术学院的展览，以及她此后的创作方向。

白：白怡怡 (Stephanie Bailey)

关：关小

白：让我们从展览的标题和它的概念开始谈起，“扁平金属”——对你有何意义？作为艺术家，标题对你而言重要吗？

关：关于展览的题目“扁平金属”，开始我想要取一个表达准确，直接阐述意图的名字。但后来我意识到自己恰巧陷入到自己最不喜欢的方式中。于是我换了一个角度取名。比喻是修辞手法里最为巧妙的一种，是非常恰当的传达方式。对我来说“扁平金属”是一种比直接阐述意图更准确的表达方式。如果我跟你说一个词，比如“-ism”（什么主义）或者“post-”（后什么）等，如果你不了解背景你不会知道那个词确切的意思。但是每个人都能够知道“扁平”和“金属”是什么，每个人对“扁平”或者“金属”都有不同的想象和理解。这种个人经过想象处理后得到的抽象认知在我看来是被传达之物的实质，是真正的“准确”。对我来说“扁平金属”有一种把成分复杂的事物浓缩转换成另一种物质的感觉，这和视觉艺术家的工作类似，我们用某种手段转换复杂之物。

标题对我而言是重要的。标题使用文字这种材料，同装置里的其它部件一起，共同完成了这一语境的建造。对我来说这种方式让观看变得更加开放，观众成为意图形成的诱导者，建造者，成为新场景的消费者和代理商，并依据自身的感受成为被语境服务的主体。

白：在“扁平金属”中展示的雕塑装置，跟你之前的作品例如《纪录片：地心穿刺》（2011–2012）很不一样。后者当中你采用了摄影工作室的场景，并将诸如复活节岛摩艾石像的现成物放置于颜色亮丽的类似蛇纹的迷彩屏幕前方。

对于这个装置的构成，特别是对于文字、屏幕、声音和对象的布置，可否形容一下你在其形式上、结构上和物料上的考虑？背景的数目、文字和对象的选取有何重要性？而你为展览而创作的三屏录像又怎样被结合到你构思的叙事当中？
关：在我的装置作品中，我一直尽可能的试图描述一种语境，而不是去论证某一个主体，尽管它们看上去依然是单独存在的。从之前的《纪录片：地心穿刺》到《纪录片：从国家地理到BBC》（2015），我受到摄影工作室布局的影响，试图从装置结构、元素组合方式、以及复杂程度上模糊重点，制造多重主体或者说没有主体。在摄影棚中，背景布用来突出前面的拍摄对象，我故意使用鲜艳且复杂的蛇纹作为背景，使得背景和前面的物体显得同样重要，让它们在颜色、细节复杂程度、以及重要性上粘贴在一起。这次当代艺术学院的作品虽然样式上有些不同，但内部的思考和工作方式和之前是一致的。

颜色是出于个人喜好的选择。我喜欢在Photoshop中被反转颜色的影像，所以我尝试在展览中重现这种色系：那种苍白的金属颜色，是来自Photoshop在进行数字颜色反转时提供的渐进选择。对我来说，和之前的作品比较，刻意灰度化和柔和的色调不过是另一种强烈。这次在背景布的处理上，我希望使装置互相之间的关系更加融合，不仅仅让装置本身能够去描述一种语境，也试图让它们将所处的空间也转换成为该语境的一部分。于是这次我选择了半透明的网眼布料，希望让装置和装置之间在视觉上叠加在一起，让背景、前景和环境从颜色和材质上看起来更加轻盈从而融合在一起。

白：对于你如何凝固、压缩、压扁作品的时间和意义，你希望人们以一个怎样的方式与你的作品联系？

关：在作品的内在关联上我也有一些新的尝试。我认为人们并不缺少主动想象和体会的能力，但当中需要存在空隙，让人们去相信他们所体会到的。因此这次我没有给部件和部件之间设计复杂的关联结构，相反只是控制最基本的因素，比如体积和放置的位置。把物体之间“怎样关联”变成一个不可言说的抽象部分交还给观众，我则依然像以往一样为他们提供“元素”和“关键词”。

白：在这个伦敦展览中你采用了哪些关键词？

关：在雕塑的造型上也保留了我一贯的喜好，将两个相对立概念的物体放在一起：古代的雕塑和现代的现成品，件数有限的艺术品和无限重复的公共设施，等等。但读者需要知道，这并不是我唯一的的选择标准，毕竟对我而言任何事物都是可供选择的材料，包括概念。比如：这次我选择音响作为主要的现成品，然而我并不需要音响的功能性，我需要的是音响这个概念，以及它和声音的关系。我不需要声音在这里真的存在，我需要人们在看到音响的第一时间能够去想到任何一种他们所能想到的声音。就像之前作品里我对于摄影器材的使用一样，我不需要它们真的工作，我只需要摄影器材这个概念以及它与观看的关系。因此我在这里使用文字，对我而言它和装置里的其它部件一样，不过是媒介不同的材料。文字的出处、背后的意义、上文下理对我来说并不重要。文字和音响一样作为一种概念性的材料（Conceptualization material）存在于此，与其它原本的存在已经断裂。它们此时此刻的字面意思便是它们作为材料的造型。但需要一提的是，在不同的装置中，它们代表了文字组合和结构中一些不同的方式。
白：你的作品的其中一个方面是意图展示出，如你所说，我们以为是全新或现代的东西实际是古老的。例如在《纪录片：地心穿刺》的情况下，我们看见由相机纪录的历史的碎片与其自身的碎片，以及其描述所立足的框架。在“扁平金属”里，可以感觉到你采取了相似的做法，只是不再在摄影工作室里，而是博物馆里——一处我们可以见到，比方说一只巨大的古希腊脚掌（一个碎片，观众可以想象为一个巨大的雕像，作为一件具纪念性的对象）的地方。

你是否赞同“扁平金属”利用能够定义我们文化及历史身份的对象，来延续你对于时间观念的探索？

关：我所谓“新的、或现代的东西从某个角度来说也是古老的”是基于事物对我们产生的影响上来说的。比如考古文物和最新的科技产品都因为我们对其不了解（未知）而得以从意义的束缚中逃逸而出。也因为未知，造型的抽象语言得以摆脱功能性独立成为讲述的主体，从而充满了想象力。

观众如何理解我的作品肯定是一件自由的事，也是一件非常私人的事。我的作品也没有某种标准答案。因此我作品里的组织结构是我想到了什么就是你的自由。然而就我而言，像我在之前的问题中说的，对于我使用的所有材料来说，无论哪种材料，我都不在乎它们的出处、历史、背后的意义或者上下文。对我来说它们作为概念性的材料仅仅存在于此，和原本的存在已经断裂。而我之所以喜欢使用概念上矛盾对立的物体的原因，除了因为矛盾两极的事物往往来自同一种感知的不同表达之外；还有一点便是我认为这种方式能够进一步的强调这种断裂，将事物从原本的历史意义和功能意义中解放出来，从分类学中解放出来。在我的工作中，历史向来不在我的考虑范围之内。对我来说历史是一坨不断变换包装的回收物，是不断累加的材料。从某种意义上来说人类没有进步，我们一直不断的循环，复制自己。我会尽量不让观众以为我在讨论事物的历史价值。因此个人来讲，我是不喜欢“历史的碎片”这个词的，一方面如果因为看见一些特定的造型便说那是历史的碎片，这太符号化；另一方面，我作品里的任何物体都不是“历史的”碎片，起码和大部分人说到“历史碎片”时的意思不一样。它们就是它们自己。

至于你问到“是否赞同‘扁平金属’利用能够定义我们文化及历史身份的对象，来延续你对于时间观念的探索”，我比较不同意这样的说法。我认为这里制造了一种暗示，借由文化和历史制造了限制，成为一种刻意的区分，并企图诱导价值观。这种方式不仅太过符号化，而且也是对感知的干涉和绑架。另外，时间对我来说是一个量词，一个度量衡。我的意图和这个量词无关。最后作为作者，我的作品不主动谈论“我是谁”这种身份问题。

白：你曾说过你的作品很大程度上关于背叛世界的同时以自己的方式保持忠诚。在这方面，作为一个艺术家你如何调解艺术世界里的政治性？对于那些希望将来成为艺术家的人，你会给予怎样的建议？
关：这句话的原始出处并不是我，我引用了汉娜·阿伦特的《黑暗時代群像》中戈特霍尔德·愛
夫萊姆·萊辛的一句话。“永遠準備好背叛和站在與世界相反的立場，與此同時以自己的方式
保持忠誠”。上次提到这句话的时候，更多的是在说我认为艺术的态度，而不是对于作品的创
作。对我来说这是作为一个艺术家应有的精神。一种随时保持警醒，站在经验和“应该”的反
面观察周遭，但这不是某种聪明的计策，而是一种对自己和对世界的责任和忠诚。

在我刚入行的时候，曾经有一个前辈对我说过三句话：1，永远不要做你不愿意做的。2，
有礼貌。3，看见你的目标，然后去做。我想再加一句，只要坚持，你便会有一个位置。

此访问（节录）由 Ocula.com 委託并发表于其网站
Artist Biography

Guan Xiao (b. 1983, Chongqing; lives and works in Beijing) received her BA in Directing at the Communication University of China in 2006 and has exhibited internationally including at the OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Shenzhen, the V&A Museum, London, the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul; the Shanghai Art Museum and the Art Museum of Nanjing University of Art.

Selected exhibitions:
The shortlisted exhibition of Hugo Boss Asia Art Award, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, 2015
Basic Logic, Antenna Space, Shanghai, 2015
13th Biennale de Lyon: La vie moderne, Lyon, 2015
From a Poem to the Sunset, New acquisitions of contemporary Chinese and international art,
Daimler Contemporary Berlin, 2015
Rare Earth, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, 2015
Degeneration, ACAF, Sydney, 2014
Something Happened Like Never Happened, Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin, 2014
Film Section, Art Basel Hong Kong, agnès b. Cinema, Hong Kong, 2014
Die 8 Wege, Uferhallen, Berlin, 2013
OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Shanghai, 2013
Difference Engine, Magician Space, Beijing, 2013
艺术家简历

关小 (1983 年于重庆出生，现于北京生活及工作) 2006 年于中国传媒大学取得导演系学士学位，作品曾多次于中国及海外展出，包括于深圳 OCT 当代艺术中心、伦敦维多利亚与艾伯特博物馆 、首尔国立现代美术馆、上海美术馆、南京艺术学院美术馆等。

展览摘录：
“Hugo Boss 亚洲新锐艺术家大奖”展，上海外滩美术馆，2015
“基本逻辑”，上海天线空间，2015
“现代生活”，法国第 13 届里昂双年展，2015
“围绕观众”，纽约新美术馆三年展，2015
“从一首诗到日落”，柏林戴姆勒当代艺术馆，2015
“稀土”，维也纳 Thyssen-Bornemisza 当代美术馆，2015
“Degeneration”，悉尼澳洲当代艺术基金会 (ACAF)，2014
“你知道我是谁吗？身份政治下的艺术”，安特卫普当代艺术馆，2014
“一些事情发生了就像从未发生”，柏林 Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler，2014
“光影现场”，香港巴塞尔艺术展，agnès b. 电影院，2014
“8 种路径”， 柏林 Uferhallen，2013
OCT 当代艺术中心上海馆，2013
“差异引擎”，北京魔金石空间，2013
“创意中国”，伦敦维多利亚与艾伯特博物馆，2007
“浮游 — 中国艺术新一代”，首尔韩国国立现代美术馆，2007
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Lower Gallery, Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Mall, London SW1Y 5AH

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