

This is the third time that the two of you have duo exhibitions together, once in Toulouse and once in Tokyo, how do you feel about this exhibition? How do you think it's similar or different from the previous encounters? How do you feel having this exhibition in Hong Kong in particularly different from the other locations?

這是你們倆第三次舉辦雙人聯展，對上兩次分別在圖盧茲和東京。你怎樣看這次聯展呢？它和上兩次有分別嗎？在香港舉辦展覽，和其他地方相比，有甚麼區別？

CW (Charwei Tsai): Chi-Tsung and I are both from Taiwan and born only six months apart, so in addition to the duo exhibitions, we have been included in many group exhibitions together, mostly with the focus on Taiwanese contemporary art. Besides Toulouse and Tokyo that were mentioned, we were also in the same exhibitions in Mumbai, Budapest, Herzliya, Shanghai, Taipei, and now in Hong Kong. Our works come together well because we share similar topics of interest and a sense of minimal aesthetics yet our artistic approaches are very different. While we both play with accident and control, our execution processes are quite the opposite. He perfects in control and completes the works by allowing rooms for accidents. I work more intuitively with accidents as the main element and I am less concerned about control. Chi-Tsung spend a lot of time at his studio to test his works until they reach a level that he is satisfied with before he presents them. I often work more site-specifically with materials that I source locally and most of the time the experimentations become the final works.

蔡（蔡佳葳）：季聰和我都來自台灣，年齡相距不過六個月。除了雙人聯展，我們也一同參與其他聯展，大部分是關於台灣當代藝術的。除了你所說的圖盧茲和東京聯展外，我們也曾在孟買、布達佩斯、荷茲利亞、上海、台北聯展碰面，這次來到香港。我們的作品適合聯合展覽，因為我們對相近的課題感興趣，作品風格也比較簡約。雖然我們都愛運用隨機和控制，我們的作畫過程卻挺相反的。我比較着重作品的隨機性，不太着意控制成品；季聰則花相當的時間在畫室裡做測試，直至作品達到他心目中的水平，才向人展示。我的作品經常是場域特定的，所用的物料大都來自當地。很多時候，我的創作實驗會演變成最後的成品。

The geographic and cultural proximities of Hong Kong and Taiwan allow the local audience to relate to our works more. For example, in my work, the tradition of ancestor worship and praying with incense in Taoist and Buddhist temples and the tradition Chinese calligraphy are

elements that are very familiar to the local audience. In Chi-Tsung's works, the audience may easily relate them to traditional Chinese landscape paintings.

由於香港和台灣在地域和文化上相近，觀眾比較容易跟我們的作品產生共鳴。例如，在我的作品中，奠祭祖先、在道教和佛教廟宇裡燃點香燭祈求和中國傳統書法也是本地觀眾熟悉的元素。在季璁的作品中，觀眾很容易能夠聯想到中國傳統山水畫。

吳（吳季璁）：除了三次的雙個展，還有多次聯展，我們的作品也被安排在相同的空間。我覺得每次不同的作品組合，都會帶出很不一樣的討論，比如這次兩人皆是展出攝影系列作品，佳葳作品中寫滿經文的線香，緩慢燃燒，隱喻某種物質的轉換與精神性的延續；我特別喜愛最後一張照片中，近景廢墟般的香灰殘留著經文，對應遠方模糊的香港城市景觀，給人對於自身存在的諸多省思。我的作品中，試圖聯結傳統山水的概念，與直接攝影的實驗，將影像產生的過程亦納入思考，對攝影提出不同的想像。兩人相似的部分，也許在於當代的藝術形式語言，卻根植於對藝術、文化傳統的探討，而路徑卻截然不同，像是一組唯心與唯物的有趣對照。香港是一個文化非常多元混雜的地方，並存者中國傳統文化與西方的都市生活形態，正好和我們兩人作品中的語境相呼應。

Wu: In addition to the three duos, our work has been arranged to be shown in the same space for many other joint exhibitions. Every different work combination resulted in very different discussions. For instance, both of us are showing photographic works this time. In CW's work, we see incense covered with written scriptures slowly burning, symbolizing a material transformation and spiritual continuation. In particular, I like the last photograph. In the foreground, we see bits and pieces of scriptures in the remains of burnt incense contrasting with the blurred city landscape of Hong Kong in the background. It provokes a lot of reflections about my own existence. In my work, I tried to mix traditional landscape painting and photographic experiment. I took into account the process of formation of the images and made certain imaginations about photography itself. Of course, we share contemporary art as a medium. But beyond that is our interest in discussing art and cultural tradition. Yet, we execute it in completely different ways. Our works look like contrasting images of idealism and utilitarianism. Hong Kong is culturally diversified. Both traditional Chinese culture and modern Western metropolitan lifestyle exist. This corresponds to our works.

Your works are both draw from Chinese culture and Eastern philosophy, how do you see this yourself? What were some of the factors and reasons led to this? Is there any experiences or people in your life that may have inspired this exploration?

你們的作品都從中國文化和東方哲學中取材。你們怎樣看這些元素呢？甚麼驅使你們這

樣取材？是不是特定的人或經驗啟發你們討論這些課題呢？

CW: In my generation, the cultural divide between the East and the West is becoming less and less relevant. Many artists today are traveling back and forth between different continents. I would say more specifically that my work is deeply rooted in Taiwanese culture based on the mix of influences coming from Chinese mainland before the Cultural Revolution as well as from Japan, US, and the indigenous tribes of Taiwan. Zen Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Taoism, Shamanism, traditional Chinese calligraphy, Chinese landscape paintings, Japanese aesthetics, Hong Kong cinema, Taiwanese pop music, bonsais, tea ceremony, tribal dance, herbal medicine, Tai Chi, mountains, sea, Typhoons, earthquakes are all part of the diverse cultural and geographic composition of Taiwan that I am heavily influenced by.

蔡：在我們這一代，東西文化分野變得越來越小。很多藝術家也穿梭於不同洲省間工作。我的作品特別受台灣文化影響，也就是文革前的中國大陸、日本、美國和台灣原居民文化的混合體。同時，佛教禪宗、藏傳佛教、道教、黃教、中國傳統書法、中國山水畫、日本美學、香港電影、台灣流行音樂、盆景、茶道、民俗舞、傳統草藥、太極、山、海、颱風、地震全都是台灣多元文化和地理的組成部分，對我影響很深。

吳：我想這是台灣以及東亞區域的文化現實，傳統上受到中國文化影響深遠，19世紀開始至今，持續面對著歐美文化、現代化的衝擊，而台灣複雜的歷史、政治因素，又更為多元。個人方面，我本身從小學習藝術，從書法、水墨到素描、水彩、雕塑等，爾後接觸現/當代藝術，而這些都很自然的成為我的創作養分。

Wu: I think this is the cultural truth of Taiwan and East Asia in general. Traditionally, we were deeply affected by Chinese culture. Yet, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we were continuously challenged by European and American culture and modernization. In particular, Taiwan's complex historical and political background adds on to its diversity. Personally, I started learning art at a young age. Calligraphy, ink, sketching, water colour, sculpting and later modern and contemporary art all became the resources of my art making naturally.

Your works carry a poetic aesthetics of the East, is it something that came to you naturally or something that you purposely create to give a certain effect or meaning?

你們的作品都帶有東方詩意。這是自然形成的，還是你們為了營造特定效果或意義，特意加到作品中？

CW: Artists like me who have spent most of their time outside of their home country tend to appreciate their culture more than those who have lived there all their lives because we tend not to take anything for granted and to romanticize about everything. Therefore, perhaps I work more directly with local materials than many of the local artists who seek for inspirations from outside of the country. However, I do not intentionally emphasize on the Eastern elements. For example, I write the Heart Sutra in Chinese because I have learned it in Chinese since I was little and I am able to write it on natural materials easier than in English since the characters make sense in any directions, whether vertical or horizontal. Besides the Mantra series, I also made many works written in English and sometimes in French depending on the context of the work. Conceptually, the works have quite a mix of influences as well. For example, I mostly work with new media such as video, photography, or performance and it is hard to say if it is Western or Eastern.

蔡：像我這樣的藝術家，大部分時間都花在國外。相對於一輩子住在國內的藝術家，我們比較欣賞自己的文化，因為我們不會把文化視為理所當然，也不會給文化扣上不切實際的幻想。因此，很多本土藝術家傾向從國外的事物中獲取靈感，而我則傾向直接從本地事物中取材。不過，我並不特意強調東方元素。例如，我選擇用中文書寫心經，是因為我年少時是用中文學習心經的。相對於英文，我更容易能夠把中文字寫在自然物料上，因為中文是無論橫向和縱向書寫也可以的。除了經典系列，因應環境和作品，我也會在創作中運用英文和法文。在概念上，作品也受多方面影響。例如，我的作品多屬新媒體創作，例如錄像、攝影、表演等，這些都很難明確歸類為東或西方元素。

Charwei, you've been transcribing Heart Sutra onto ephemeral objects, how does it feel to hand transcribing Heart Sutra to an element, incense, which is used abundantly in Buddhist rituals as an object of offering and in direct attachment of the exhibition location -- Hong Kong? When the object's state of ephemeral requires a human act, by lighting it, what's the significance of the act and how do you see the relationship of it in your work?

佳葳，你曾在多種無常的物質上書寫心經，包括今次選用的香燭。香燭是佛教儀式常用的奠祭物品，尤其是在今次的展覽地點 – 香港。你怎樣看這種創作經驗？當物品的消逝需要人為的誘因，也就是點燃香燭，你認為這種誘因有何重要？這跟你的作品又有甚麼關係呢？

CW: In *Incense Mantra*, the act of lighting the incense is a ritual with a purpose of initiating a

thought and a physical transformation. As I learn more about rituals, I discover that they are usually very functional and not just used for superstitious reasons. Natural elements are often introduced for various purposes; for example, fire for transformation, water for purification, metal for protection, and wood for construction, ...etc. It is very easy to misinterpret a ritual and use it for the wrong reasons because most it is often based on a whole other value system that we are not accustomed to. Therefore, I find a ritual helpful when I have an understanding of its purpose and use it as ways for the mind to enter a state of higher awareness. For example, when I lit the incense to begin this work, I prayed for Hong Kong and its people.

蔡：在《香咒》中，點燃香燭是一個啟發思考與物質轉換的儀式。在我研究儀式的過程中，我發現儀式除了是迷信外，還有重要的實用功能。儀式中採用的自然物質帶有很多功能，例如火誘發物質轉化，水有淨化功效，鋼鐵有保護作用，木材能用作建設等等。我們很容易錯誤解讀儀式，因為它們往往建基於一套我們不熟悉的價值系統上。因此，當我理解儀式背後的價值系統，我才能夠明白儀式的好處，同時利用它把精神提升到更高的層面。例如，在我開始創作這件作品的時候，我點燃了香燭，並替香港和它的居民祈禱。

Chi-Tsung, the works of yours revolve around themes of time, light, visual perception that links to memory and images. What's the linkage of Wrinkled-Texture series with this notion? 季璉，你的作品通常環繞時間、燈光、視覺等課題，以及它們跟回憶和影像之間的關係。這次的《皺法習作》跟這些課題有甚麼關係？

吳：在皺法習作中，主要的想法是將攝影回歸到紀錄光線(光畫)這個最根本的概念，以繪畫的觀點去想像攝影，去除了工具與技術性操作的層面，轉而試圖捕捉一種隨機與不可控制的變化，像是一個反攝影的攝影實驗。

In Wrinkled-Texture series, the main inspiration is to bring photography back to the basic idea of "recording light" (the picture of light). I thought of photography from the point of view of painting. Setting aside tools and the technicality of photography, I tried to capture a random and uncontrollable change. It sounds like an anti-photography experiment.

As I've noticed, while the two of you are contemplating on different state of transformation – Charwei is manifesting on the physical state of the text (Heart Sutra) to the spiritual form while Chi-Tsung is focusing on the notion of transformation of images. How do you define or interpret this notion of transformation in your works?

我發現，雖然你們兩人也着重探討不同形式的轉化，佳葳較著重把物質（心經的書寫版）轉化為精神層面，而季璉則著重影響的轉換。你們如何界定和解讀你們在作品中使用的轉化呢？

CW: In this work, the incense, a recognizable object slowly burns into a pile of ashes, and as the ashes crumble, the city's celebrated skyline reveals itself in the background. Cairo, Babylon, Athens, Baghdad, Damascus, Lucknow...etc were all cities that were once as glamorous as Hong Kong is today, however, throughout history, they are destined to transform. Transformation in my work is important as a way to illustrate impermanence.

蔡：在這件作品中，香燭是一件大家都認識的物品，慢慢化成灰燼。同時，城市聞名的天際線在背景中慢慢呈現。開羅、巴比倫、雅典、巴格達、大馬士革、勒克瑙都曾經跟今天的香港一樣繁華，不過，在歷史的洪流中，它們注定會轉變。轉變是我展示無常的方式。

吳：我非常感興趣於創作中的隨機與不可控制，這是藝術中最迷人的部分。皺法習作的創作過程、紙張的皺褶變化、陽光的狀態以及曝光過程中對紙張的調整塑形，都無法真正控制其變化，而最終的影像直到水洗前完全無法預知。如果一般的攝影是架構在熟練而精準的技術控制上，這系列攝影追求的卻是反其道而行，整個行為和過程正是在追尋某種隨機與不可知。

Wu: I am very interested in the randomness and uncontrollability in the process of creation. I think this is the most mesmerizing quality of art. In Wrinkled-Texture series, how the papers crumple, the state of the sun and the way papers transform in the process of exposure are all not really controllable. One cannot predict the final image until you finish washing. If photography usually operates on proficient and precise control of the mechanics, this series of work do just the opposite. The whole process is about seeking randomness and uncertainty.



Both of your works involve an “act” of performance with concepts in photography, “act” meaning Charwei meditating and hand inscribing Heart Sutra on to incense and Chi-Tsung exposing the paper under the sunlight and adjusting the angle for the optimistic exposure. How do you see the relationship of this “act” in your work?

你們的作品都包含某種行動的元素。佳蕤的作品中，冥想與手寫心經是一種行動。則把紙張放在陽光底下，並調節角度來尋找最佳的曝光效果。你們認為這些行動對作品有甚麼意義呢？

CW: When I start a project, I try to enter a state of mind with higher awareness and to focus on my writing and its relationship with the object that I am writing on. When I am able to focus better that is when I feel like the process of the work is the most effective; my writing naturally flows better and the photographs or videos naturally turn out to be more refined. Sometimes when I am rushing to complete a project, I feel like the rush takes away from the meaning of the work. But in the end, it is only me who can make this differentiation, so I find it is very important to be authentic and true to myself. No one else is able to measure the genuineness of a work except for the artist him/herself.

蔡：我開始一件作品的時候，精神通常會進入一種提升的狀態。我嘗試專注在我的書寫、以及它和用作書寫的物質的關係上。當我能夠專注的時候，我認為創作是最有效率的。我的書寫自然變得流暢，相片和錄像也變得細膩。當我趕著完成作品，我總覺得創作變得沒有意義。這些差別只有我自己知道。因此，我必須完全尊重和忠於自己。除了藝術家本人，沒有人能夠量度作品的成功。

Your exposures to the international art scene came rather early in your careers as artists, does that have an effect on the way you to shape your work?

在你的藝術家生涯中，你很早就獲得國際展出機會。這對你的作品有甚麼影響呢？

CW: I often wonder about this because very fortunately, the first time I exhibited was at an international institution, and since then I have always been invited to make artworks for exhibitions instead of just creating something at a studio then putting them in an exhibition. My works turn out to be more site-specific because of this. I am not sure how my work would turn out differently if I had started more as a studio artist. Another aspect is that I started out working mostly with museums or other non-profit spaces before working with commercial galleries. I find this to be very helpful to begin working as an artist because the productions as well as the conceptual developments of my work were well supported by the museums, so

I never had to consider the commercial aspects while making the works. I remember when I first started working with commercial galleries, I find it a headache to have to worry about how to preserve the works, which were mostly about the ephemeral and how to make them archival for collections. Now I have managed to find ways to balance and to turn the preservation of the works into art forms of their own. For example, in the recent years, I have been exploring photography and video more in depth than in the past, so the result of capturing the ephemeral is not just documentation, but rather it takes on its own artistic form.

蔡：這是我經常思考的。幸運地，我第一次展覽就是在國際機構中舉辦。從此，我經常獲邀為展覽創作特定的作品，而不是在畫廊中做好的作品在展覽中展示。因此，我的作品的場域特定性較強。我也不肯定如果我從畫廊創作起步，作品會不會有所不同。另一點是，我開始的時候大都是跟博物館和非牟利機構合作，其後才與商業畫廊合作。作為藝術家，我認為這對我的創作很有幫助。由於博物館在理念和執行上都非常支持我的創作，因此我從來不需要考慮作品的商業價值。剛開始跟商業畫廊合作時，我發現如何保存作品。讓它們容易收藏是一件很讓人頭疼的事，因為我的創作大都是有關無常的。現在，我懂得平衡這些需要，並把保存作品本身轉化成一種藝術形式。例如，在過去幾年，我嘗試更深入地探討相片與錄像。鏡頭下展現的無常並不單單是存檔，而是另一種獨特的藝術形式。

吳：也許更讓我意識到自身文化的特殊性與差異性。

Wu: Perhaps this makes me more aware of the uniqueness and difference within my own culture.

The contemporary art scene is predominated by the west; do you ever feel the need to raise a voice from the east in your works? Have you ever craft to embed any sort of identity or symbols from your culture that imply special meanings?

現在的當代藝術圈子由西方主導，你們對於自己的作品作為東方代表有甚麼感想？你們有沒有嘗試在作品中加入代表自己文化或身份的記號？

CW: I have been living and working half in the West and half in the East, so I never felt the dominance of the art world by either. Nowadays, many younger generation artists from the West, such as from the US or Europe or Australia, on the contrary, wishing to gain more diverse life experiences from living in Asia or Latin America or Africa. I feel like there are advantages to both, to live in larger cities where there are well-established structures for the



arts or to be living in more remote places where there are richer subject matters that are less elitist. I never felt like there is a need to raise a voice from the East in particular. Asian artists, especially in the recent decades, are very well represented internationally. I have never made a work to emphasize on a particular culture, it just comes naturally as I am more drawn to certain cultures than others. Again, I find the West and East differentiation or cultural identity issues less relevant to artists today.

蔡：我在東西方工作和生活的時間各佔一半，因此我從來不覺得藝術圈子被它們其中一個主導。現今很多西方年輕一代的藝術家，比如來自美國、歐洲或澳洲的朋友，都希望透過在亞洲、拉丁美洲和非洲生活獲得更豐富的人生經驗。我覺得在基建完善的大城市中生活，和在較偏遠但題材豐富和相對沒有那麼精英主義的小城市生活各有好處。我從不覺得需要特意替東方發聲。尤其在過去幾十年，亞洲藝術家在國際舞台上有所機會。我從來不為了強調某種文化而創作，作品的特質是自然流露的，那是由於我對特定文化的共鳴較強，僅此而已。我認為，東西的分野或文化身份對今天的藝術家來說，意義不大。

吳：我想並非刻意為之，亞洲以及諸多開發中和第三世界國家的當代藝術，因為對於歐美現當代藝術的研究、吸收與討論，有時反而呈現出更為開闊的世界觀，與在地文化融合出的多樣性，而歐美當代藝術世界也一直積極的吸收世界各地優秀的藝術家，這本來就是自然而然的交流過程。我以為歐美在當代藝術領域的主要優勢在於系統的健全與制度化、完整的商業機制、學術研究展覽機制等等，其中的技術與網絡，或許才是其他區域的藝術發展難以企及的。

Wu: I guess this is not something we do on purpose. Contemporary art in Asia and some developing third world countries have benefited in a wider world view and diversified local culture by studying, learning from and discussing contemporary art in Europe and America. At the same time, the contemporary art world in the West has been absorbing talented artists from all around the world. This is a natural process of exchange. I think the West benefits from its comprehensive structure, an institutionalized and complete commercial and academic system. The high technical level and network involved can hardly be matched by other parts of the world.

“To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed”. It is a sentence by Susan Sontag from her book *On Photography*. If we apply this sentence to your work, what would be the “thing” that you wish to appropriate in accordance with the quoted sentence?

“攝影是改變被攝影事物”。這是蘇珊·桑塔格在《關於攝影》一書中說的。套用這個說法，你們在作品中嘗試改變的是什麼呢？

CW: I don't want to answer this question because I find her writing unrelated to my work and it's a topic that is more relevant in the 90s. Even when I do work in photography I am not thinking about the issues of photography. It's simply a medium for me to conceptualize my work.

蔡：我不想回答這個問題，因為我覺得她的文字跟我的作品沒有關係，她寫的課題跟 90 年代的藝術關係比較密切。當我創作相片時，我關心的不是攝影本身。攝影對我來說不過是一種藝術形式，落實我的想法。

吳：「攝影是對被拍攝物的佔有」，是著眼於攝影再現現實的觀點，探討其隱藏的欲望；

而《皺法習作》正是反思現今攝影創作的侷限性，如：套裝的數位系統、看似無限可能

其實極其封閉侷限、影像泛濫的大量複製傳播、過於技術性的操作.....等等。在這系列

作品中的 " 拍攝 "，是最本質的紀錄光線，而真正的 " 對象物 "，只不過是一連串的隨

機與巧合。

Wu: “Photography is to be possessed by the photographed”. This focuses on the representation of the truth by photography, and explores its hidden desires. Wrinkled-texture series reflect upon the limitations of photography nowadays, such as the predetermined digital system, the actual limitations of the seemingly limitless, the flood of images by the mass media, the overuse of technicality etc. In my “photographic” work, I tried to “document light”. My real objects were merely a series of randomness and coincidences.