



时间作为对抗—— 谈“王兵：三个肖像” Time as Provocation: on “Wang Bing: Three Portraits”

“王兵：三个肖像”展览现场
2016年
沃迪斯当代艺术研究所
《采油日记》
2008年

View of “Wang Bing: Three Portraits”
2016
CCA Wattis Institute
Crude Oil
2008

Courtesy Wang Bing
PHOTO: Johnna Arnold

对于日益城市化的中国人来说，淘宝等网站和手机应用加速完成了各种社会交易：无论是设置虚拟恋人的叫醒电话，或是凌晨3点寻找平面设计师来设计公司标志。正是在这样的社会背景下，我们方能理解王兵影片中不妥协的力量。这位工作生活在北京的导演在全然不同的时间性、社会现实和政治意识之间游刃有余。

沃迪斯当代艺术研究所展览标题中展览标题中的“肖像”是指王兵的三部影片，这不是一次由片头至片尾的电影放映，而是用展厅空间呈现的展览，尖锐地描绘了被当代中国的宏大叙事遗忘了的个体命运。这些影片绝不是那种能在手机上随意观看的“秒拍”视频。时长14个小时的《采油日记》（2008）是本次展览的重点，为此策展人安东尼·休伯曼和杰米·斯蒂文斯改变了沃迪斯美术馆的既有展览模式。美术馆每天开放5到7个小时，参观者需要三天时间才能看完完整部影片，这狠狠挑战了一番我们与时间的习惯性关系。

《采油日记》占去展览大部分空间，在一块巨大的屏幕上播放，观众可以坐在搭建于一个低平台上的两排影院椅上观看。在这样的安排下，主观性本身被划定为舞台，持续观影的方式不落地得以落实。我们置身于青海省戈壁滩上原油采油人的栖所，目睹他们一天14个小时的高强度工作。我们被敦促着见证的不仅是危险条件下的劳动本身，还包括无聊的间隙和中途休息。最先映入眼帘的是用金属集装箱改装成的一间休息室，工人们在这里说笑逗乐、发手机短信、打盹。接着，我们看到工人们在另一个集装箱打造的临时居所里看电视、吃饭，天花板上有一排窗户，让人感觉身处井底。与这些画面交替出现的，是多风的沙漠地貌铸就的矛盾之美，与工人的生活形成鲜明对比。日夜似乎是混乱的。因为王兵的电影都是凭靠最精简的摄制组员，以数码摄影机拍摄而成，他的摄影机似乎从不关机，且既不是偷拍、也不是大张旗鼓地拍摄。电影历史与工人生活的记录紧密相关，最早期的影像之一、卢米埃尔兄弟1895年的影片《工厂大门》便是例证。王兵的电影将时间与生活融合，荒谬地引发出相对于此时此地的背景离乡及去时间化之感，我们观看其他人类这般平常乏味的生活时，接受到电影所辐射出的陌生与不适。

与这部杰作并列展览的，是另外两部较短的影片，分别拍摄于《采油日记》的前、后一年。一部影片中，主人公只言未发；而另一部里，主人公从头说到尾，语言是不稳定的阵地，让观者位于另一个截然不同的时空。前面展厅展览的是《无名者》（2009，94分钟）。该片跟踪记录了一个住在中国北方偏远的地下洞穴、远离文明社会结构的男人的四季生活。王兵在拍摄第一部剧情长片《夹边沟》（2010）时偶然邂逅这个男人，并为他毫无物质欲望的简单生活方式所打动。他没有名字，当王

兵就拍摄征询他的同意时，他从不回应，这种内隐的亲密度贯穿着整部电影。农业生活与后末日，这个男人似乎存在于时间之外，科幻般指向过去的文明和想象中的将来。

后面展厅呈现的是《和凤鸣》（2007，227分钟），摄像机跟随主人公和凤鸣进入她的家，整支影片内容便是她于家中讲述自己在1949年后的命运。和凤鸣与丈夫王景超都是记者，在文化大革命中被下放到劳教农场。王景超后来被送到戈壁滩荒蛮的夹边沟农场（这又将观者带回《采油日记》的现场），饿死在那里。这对夫妻再也没有团聚。20世纪90年代初，和凤鸣出版了回忆录：《经历——我的1957年》。这部长达4个小时的纪录片看似直截了当，实则有几条时间线牵扯其间：影片时间、动荡的历史时间、主人公的个人时间。王兵并未向主人公提出任何问题，他以执著的沉默在那段距离之间架起一座桥梁。和凤鸣心意坚决、条理清晰地按时间顺序讲述了她三十年的生活，细节饱满、情绪充沛。太阳西沉，客厅里和凤鸣的身影渐渐融入夜色，随后她说出追忆丈夫的一段铿锵之言：

“我曾是他的世界、他的天堂和他的太阳。而今太阳突然消失不见了。”

影片中，过去的证词通过口述放进现实社会，成为直接的对抗。口述将主观性的主体放置于我们时常在抽象概念中听到、读到的语境中。

隔壁展厅的电视屏幕上，每天放映由艺术家露西·拉文挑选的影片，用她的话来说，这是为“思考王兵给静态生命注入复杂性的影片中的事件、运动、空间和本质所提供的敲门砖”。这些影片中，最老的一部是荷利斯·法朗普顿1969年拍摄的7分钟短片《柠檬》，它体现了折射于时空转换的生命。光源增强和减弱一如日升日落的缩影，一只柠檬身上的光影随之发生变化。镜头微微颤动的，似乎是犹豫不决的每一秒，直到柠檬完全被阴影笼罩。这让人想起《和凤鸣》中的一幕，黑暗中和凤鸣突然问导演：“可以把灯打开吗？”只是，在王兵的作品中，灯亮之后，电影与时间还在一起向前继续。

在柠檬表面那逐渐微弱的光线中，我想起王兵电影里，那些工人辛苦劳作的月球一般的沙漠地貌，和时间的牵引力，那些有生命、会呼吸的实体。如果这些影片是在索求，那它们索求的并非单纯是观者的时间，它们映射的是超越影片所描述的内容、超越影片的地缘政治的真正的必需，迫使我们回头深思我们自己的公民生活、我们的伦理道德、我们的契约精神。它旨在声称，假以时日，当下时刻便能彰显出真正的意义。邓祖儿（由杨琴翻译）

由露西·拉文策划短片单元
凯文·杰罗姆
《世纪》
2012年

Accompanying film program selected by Lucy Raven
Kevin Jerome
Century
2012

PHOTO: Johnna Arnold



For the increasingly urbanized Chinese population, web and mobile apps like Taobao expedite various social and monetary transactions, whether to schedule wakeup calls from fictitious boyfriends and girlfriends or seek a graphic designer for a company logo at 3:00 AM. It is against this social backdrop that we can come to understand the power in the uncompromising films of Wang Bing, the Beijing-based filmmaker who transacts in a very different kind of temporality, social reality, and political consciousness.

The “portraits” of the exhibition title refer to three of Wang Bing’s films, shown not as screenings with a beginning and an end but in the form of a gallery exhibition. These are trenchant confrontations of individual lives that have been forgotten in the grand narratives of contemporary China. Vine (or Miaopai, the Chinese answer to the video sharing app) playbacks these are not. With the 14-hour film *Crude Oil* (2008) as the centerpiece, curators Anthony Huberman and Jamie Stevens set up an exhibition that allows the frame of the institution to buckle. The Wattis Institute is open five to seven hours a day, and it will take three days of visits to complete this exhibition, taunting our habitual relationship to time into a provocation.

Crude Oil takes up most of the exhibition space and is shown on a monumental screen viewable from two rows of cinema seats installed on a low platform. In this configuration, the durational act of viewing is subtly suggested, demarcating subjectivity as a stage in itself. We confront the habitat and the grueling 14-hour-long work day of crude oil field extractors in the Gobi Desert of Qinghai Province. Under these perilous working conditions, we are pushed to witness not only the act of labor itself, but also the interstices of boredom and breaks in between. What we see at first is a break room fashioned out of a metal shipping container, where workers banter, text on their mobile phones, and nap. Later, we watch the workers at their temporary home, another shipping container with windows along the ceiling that gives the sensation of being in the bottom of a well, as they watch television and eat. In between these scenes, the windy terrain of the desert casts a conflicted beauty in stark contrast to the lives of these workers. Day and night seem discombobulated. As in all his films, Wang Bing shoots on a digital camera with a minimal crew, and his camera never seems to shut off, and does not inhabit the space as either surveillance or agit-prop. The history of film is indelibly connected to the documented lives of workers, as attested by one of the earliest moving images, the Lumière brothers’ 1895 film *La Sortie de l’Usine Lumière à Lyon* (*Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory in Lyon*). Fusing time and life, Wang’s film paradoxically elicits a sense of displacement and de-temporalization of the here and now, radiating a strangeness and discomfort as we watch other human beings engaged in the banality of their existence.

Bracketing this magnum opus are two shorter films that were made a year prior to and a year after *Crude Oil*. In one the subject never utters a word, and in another the subject speaks throughout the entire film, thereby situating the viewer in a diametrical time-space where language is an unstable ground. In the front room is *Man With No Name* (2009, 94 min). It follows, for four seasons, a man who lives outside the structure of civilization in an underground cave in a remote part of northern China. Wang Bing came across the man while shooting his first feature-length fiction



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film, *The Ditch* (2010), and was moved by the basic ways in which he lives in opposition to material desires. He is without a name because, when Wang asked for permission to film, the man never responded, and it is this implicit intimacy that sustains the entire film. Agrarian and post-apocalyptic, the man seems to exist out of time, pointing to a past civilization and to an imagined future, a present as a kind of science fiction.

In the backroom is *Fengming*, a *Chinese Memoir* (2007, 227 min), in which the camera follows its subject, He Fengming, into her apartment, where she recounts, throughout the entire duration of the film, her life in post-1949 China. Both journalists committed to the Cultural Revolution, she and her husband were sent to reeducation camps. Her husband, Jinchao, was later sent to the brutal Jiabiangou camp in the Gobi Desert (thus rerouting us back to the locales of *Crude Oil*), where he died of hunger. The couple never reunited. In the early 1990s, He published a memoir titled *1957: How I Lived It*. Deceptively straightforward, several temporalities run in tandem and in entanglement in this four-hour-long documentary: the filmic time, the historical time of the cultural upheaval, and the personal time of the subject. Wang Bing does not pose any questions to his subject, and bridges that distance through a committed lack of intrusion. She expresses, with a resolute clarity in chronological details, 30 years of her life, juxtaposing detail and sentiment. In the living room, against the setting sun, He slowly becomes obscured in darkness, not long after a potent passage in which she reminisces on her husband:

“I was his world, his heaven and his sun. And now suddenly this sun has disappeared.”

With this film, the oral tradition serves as a direct confrontation through which the testimonies from the past can be told in real time. It puts the body, the holder of subjectivity, back into a language that we so often hear and read about in abstraction en masse.

On a monitor in an adjoining room, a different film each day is selected by the artist Lucy Raven, providing, in her words, “entry points into thinking about matter, movement, space, and the stuff in Wang Bing’s work that gives complexity to still life.” The oldest of these, Hollis Frampton’s 1969 seven-minute short film *Lemon*, exemplifies this refraction of life through spatio-temporal means. A lemon is illuminated up close as the light source intensifies and diminishes, a sped-up version of the rising and setting sun. The film pulsates as if taking in each second as a moment of hesitation, until the fruit is completely concealed in shadow. It recalls one scene in which He Fengming, shrouded in darkness, suddenly addresses the filmmaker: “Would you mind turning the light on?” Only, in Wang Bing’s work, when the lights are on, the film is still running, complicit with time.

In the waning glimmer of light on the surface of the fruit, I am reminded of the lunar landscape of the desert where the workers toil, and the traction of time in all of Wang Bing’s films, living breathing entities. If these films are demanding, it is not that they demand simply a viewer’s time, but that they reflect back to us a real necessity beyond what is depicted, beyond its geopolitics, and force us back to think deeply about our own civic lives, our ethics, and our engagements. It purports that the present moment, if we give it time, has real implications. **Jo-ey Tang**