Couple months ago I was recommended to watch a new Chinese independent film titled *Kaili Blues* 路边野餐 (2015). And tonight I had a chance to see the film at a movie theater near Long-Hua Rd. in Shanghai.

The film is a young Chinese director Bi Gan's 毕赣 debut feature film, which he wrote and directed. The first segment of the film, which introduces the characters and their beginnings, closely resembles the cinematic style of a world famous contemporary Chinese independent director Jia Zhangke 贾樟柯, which I consider to be absolutely distasteful and completely non-cinematic, for it leans toward postmodern cinema so-called 'video art'. In my opinion video art is simply not cinema, for its complete lack of camera work concentrates on what occurs within the frame as opposed to true cinema that allows the camera to rhythmically maneuver in time and consequently sculpting the director's vision within the reality in which we live in. The first segment of *Kaili Blues* was a video art. However, it had to be distasteful and non-cinematic in order for the following segment to work, which is all about, as Andrei Tarkovsky would say, "sculpting in time".

The second segment of the film is a long take that lasts over 40 minutes. Although the sequence is not clearly defined as a dream sequence, it is clear that the elements of time (past, present, and future) are intertwined into a single space. As opposed to the first sequence that was shot dead steady on a tripod, the second sequence was shot handheld with some sort of a steadying mechanism. What are brilliant about this sequence is that 1) the length of the sequence makes us forget the setups introduced in the first sequence even though we see the objects that carry over by the main character from the first sequence and 2) the never ending camera movement throughout the sequence ceaselessly unravels and joins the elements of time in the backdrop of realness (the sequence does not rely on special effects nor special coloring such as black & white, sepia, color muting, etc.). In short, the second sequence literally sculpts in time the essence of the film – our present beings rooted in the shadows of our past aiming for the future that is intrinsically uncertain; incomprehensible but understood.

And the second sequence eventually comes to an end and goes straight back to the distasteful video art that wraps up the film. It is as though the beginning and the ending of the film don't at all exist. I personally say that the beginning and the ending of *Kaili Blues* do not exist and have only a little significance (that is, to have details from the first sequence to spill into the second sequence and spill out to the third sequence). Because cinema is a temporal art, the existence of opening and closure is inevitable. Thus, erasing the opening and the closure by utilizing the distasteful and empty form of video art is a fantastic way to present only the middle second sequence, which is a pure cinema that is intrinsically illogical and dreamy, for life is as such. I personally prefer to place the most value on the beginning and the ending and bring the middle to erasure. I never thought that so much value could be placed on the middle of the film and have it be all. *Kaili Blues* is, in that respect, a fantastic film that should be widely seen, and I thank Bi Gan for executing his vision with such great honesty and showing me a new way of approaching cinema. But, to be honest, I won't be taking that approach.

In terms of composition and rhythm, Bi Gan is quite mediocre and is not at all 'there' yet. He also presents the great nature of Guizhou as the backdrop but fails to bring it into the film. However, he is an honest filmmaker and a believer of cinema. That's quite enough, no?

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