Peng Zuqiang

Sight Leak

ANTENNA SPACE

Artissima

Peng Zuqiang (b. 1992, Changsha) currently lives and works in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. He graduated from the Goldsmiths, University of London in 2014, and from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2017.

Peng Zuqiang makes video, film and installation, with an attention to the affective qualities within histories, bodies, and language, approximating meanings through associations and coincidences.

Peng is going to start his residency at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam in fall 2022. His recent residencies include IAS CEU, Budapest, Hungary (2022); Organhaus, Chongqing, China (2021), Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, Maine, US (2019); The Core Program, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, US (2017-2019). He was awarded the "Jury Special Award" at the 8th Huayu Youth Award 2020, and a "Special Mentions" at the Festival Film Dokumenter in Yogyakarta, Indonesia with his first feature film, *Nan* (2020).

Sight Leak has been featured in galleries, film festivals and institutions worldwide, including (all in 2022):

Sideways Looking, Cell Project Space, London, GB (solo)
25 FPS Festival, kino kinoteka, Zagreb, HR
OCAT x KADIST Emeriging Media Artist Program: In Solidary with _____, OCAT Shanghai, CN
The Elephant Escaped, Macalline Art Centre, Beijing, CN

Other selected exhibitions and screenings of Peng Zuqiang:

- 2022 Film screeing with IAS CEU resident artists, Trafo Gallery, Budapest, HU *Transfigured Boundaries*, Cinateca Nacional, Mexico City, MX
- 2021 Hesitations, Antenna Space (ANTENNA-TENNA project), Shanghai, CN (solo) 'NEUTRON' mid-length program, Beijing International Short Film Festival, CN Más allá el mar canta, Times Art Center Berlin, DE The Art of Memory, OCAT, Shenzhen, CN Project Horizon, Cinecina Film Festival, New York, US International Masked Dancers, Cinemount Serial Filmscreening, Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, CN
 - Is It A Good Time?, screening at Mana Contemporary, Chicago, US
- 2020 A Long Hello, UCCA Beijing, CN IDFA - First Appearance section, Amsterdam, NL Festival Film Dokumenter (FFD), Yogyakarta, IN The Labyrinth of Time, Beijing International Short Film Festival, Beijing, CN Borders | No Borders program, Houston Cinema Arts Festival, US Anti-Matter, Victoria, CA
- 2019 Transoceanic Visual Exchange 2019 edition, CACHE Space, Beijing, CN Transoceanic Visual Exchange 2019 edition, Fresh Milk Art Platforms, BA The Core Exhibition, Glassell School of Art, Houston, US The Core Screening, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, US
- 2018 EthnoKino, Bern, CH The Core Exhibition, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, US German International Ethnographic Film Festival, Göttingen, DE
- 2017 International Short Programme, Dok Lepzig, DE Open City Documentary Festival, London, UK FVNMAS Festival, Gene Siskel Film Center, Chicago, US

••• •••

& among others...

Press Clipping

- 2022 Marv Recinto, "Peng Zuqiang's Sense of Touch", ArtReview Asia, Summer, 2022
- 2021 Alvin Li, "Peng Zuqiang Finds Meaning in Small Gesture", *Frieze*, Issue 223, 2021
 - Sindhu Thirumalaisamy, "The Time it Takes to do Things with Trembling Hands", *World Records Journal* vol.5, April 2021
 - Ren Yue, "Review on 'Peng Zuqiang Hesitations", LEAP, September 2021
 - Wang Shuman, "Peng Zuqiang on contact and connections", *Artforum*, August 2021 (Interview, CN only)

ArtReview

Peng Zuqiang's Sense of Touch

Marv Recinto Reviews 14 June 2022 ArtReview Asia



Peng Zuqiang. 'keep in touch', installation view, 2021. Part of 5-channel colour video installation, HD video and Super 8, 13:58

In Sideways Looking at London's Cell Project Space, the Chinese artist's moving-image installations consider connectivity and its absence

In Peng Zuqiang's first solo exhibition in Europe, the Chinese artist presents three moving-image installations ostensibly about connectivity or the lack thereof – whether interpersonal, cultural or historic. Arranged across two floors, *Sideways Looking* begins on the ground level with *The Cyan Garden* (2022), which foregrounds the ways memory haunts place. The video focuses on a friend's Airbnb business in the artist's hometown of Changsha and, in parallel, the site of the old communist underground-radio station 'Voice of the Malayan Revolution' in Hunan, destined for conversion into a luxury resort. Alternating between fictional memories of real conflict in the Malaysian countryside, audio of radio static and the physicality of commercial hospitality work as his friends turn down their lodgings, the film contemplates the bodily



Peng Zuqiang. The Cyan Garden, installation view, 2022. Single-channel video installation, colour and b&w, HD video and Super 8 transferred to HD, 08:05

and cognitive damage of the Communist Insurgency in Malaysia. The ruthless transformation of a revolutionary site to a hospitality nonplace underscores the inevitability of erasure in the name of economic progress.

Peng's five-channel installation *keep in touch* (2021), spaced across the two levels, investigates the exhibition's titular phrase via various indexes of interconnectivity and the sense of touch. The first channel in a ground-floor room features two men standing on either side of their overheating car while listening to techno music in the middle of a forest. An air of tension pulsates between the two and throughout the remaining channels: a woman rubs Tiger Balm menthol ointment on herself; footage of a man's torso as he twirls a pen and struggles to recount a story he can't remember; a closeup of two pairs of hands engaging in a game of cat's cradle while voices are heard gossiping; the last concentrates on two people cutting one another's fingernails. These overlooked, casual forms of touch intimate various degrees of familiarity. The held objects – the scissors, string, etc – become the means of acquaintance.



Peng Zuqiang. Sight Leak, installation view, 2022. Single-channel video installation, b&w 16mm and super 8mm film transferred to HD video, 12:15

In the back room of the second floor, *Sight Leak* (2021) transplants Roland Barthes's memoirs of a 1974 trip to China into the mind of a tourist who visits the artist's hometown, and who is preoccupied by questions of outsiderness and belonging. Here, as across the exhibition, Peng's multilayered deliberations on dichotomies of absences and presences play out in footage of quotidian life and the eloquence of subtle gestures.





Featured in Issue 223

Peng Zuqiang Finds Meaning in Small Gestures

The artist's poignant solo exhibition, part of Antenna Space's Antenna-tenna programme in Shanghai, captures queer life through fleeting touches and whispered speech

BY ALVIN LI IN REVIEWS ACROSS ASIA | 21 SEP 21

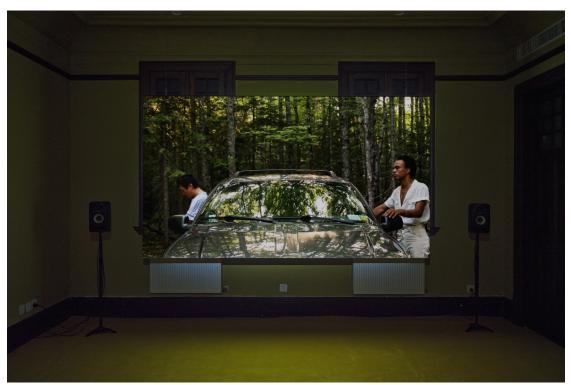


Comprised of only two works – the five-channel video installation *Keep in Touch* (2021) and a single sculptural object – artist Peng Zuqiang's first-ever solo exhibition, 'Hesitations', is poignantly concise. Spread across two floors of a villa-turned-boutique furniture studio, it dwells on oftentimes neglected moments of everyday queer life – silence and melody, gazing and touching, gossip and rumour – to amplify the social and political resonances of these minor modes of communication.



Peng Zuqiang, Keep in Touch, 2021, installation view. Courtesy: the artist and Antenna Space, Shanghai

The five vignettes of *Keep in Touch* (2021) – all under four minutes and all but one shot on Super 8 – depict intimate scenarios based on loose scripts sketched out by the artist, performed and largely improvised by friends met during a residency in Maine. Underlying is a critique of contemporary mainstream visibility and the way it works to produce and acknowledge some proper subjects to the exclusion of others. The artist responds to this representational episteme through an exceptional use of close-ups that fragment the bodies on screen – formally disavowing the complete or coherent subject – as well as by casting strictly non-white bodies, situating the work firmly in a lineage of artistic practices concerned with 'minor' and minoritarian aesthetics and politics.



Peng Zuqiang, Keep in Touch, 2021, installation view. Courtesy: the artist and Antenna Space, Shanghai

In one of the most striking scenarios, two men, one Asian and one Black, step outside an overheating car in a forest and wait for it to cool down. Bored by the silence, one of them gets back into the vehicle and puts on a CD. As a house track starts blaring out, the otherwise dull atmosphere is suddenly charged with energy, and their gazes begin to gleam with an erotic ambiguity. Such ephemeral gestures, while often deemed trivial, are integral to queer lives as historical evidence. So too is rumour: elsewhere the artist eavesdrops on gossip – the informal talk through which discussions of homosexuality

have always circulated. A small TV set placed on the gallery floor shows two pairs of hands, this time seen playing cat's cradle, accompanied by a conversation in which two friends share their experiences of queer encounters and aggressions. Here, a silent game that involves constant failing and parsing becomes a symbol of interpersonal interaction more generally, just as gossip opens up room for intimacy and solace.



Peng Zuqiang, 'Hesitations', 2021, exhibition view. Courtesy: the artist and Antenna Space, Shanghai

Other vignettes broach mundane instances of touch. A projection displays two pairs of hands, which we see cutting each other's nails to a soundtrack of frantic yet rhythmic glitches, while a television set on the gallery balcony presents a moving camera following another pair of hands as they apply Tiger Balm to soothe mosquito bites. By probing the violence that such small contacts can both occasion and shield from, Peng departs from the commonsense romanticization of touch as bodily intimacy, evoking its varied effects and ramifications for different bodies split along sexual, racial and gendered hierarchies.

On July 6th 2021, dozens of major university LGBTQ+ rights groups found that

their subscription accounts on WeChat – currently the most popular social media platform in China – had been suspended and scrubbed of all content overnight. The account names had been replaced by the uniform designation 'Unnamed Account'. This was the latest episode in the country's erratic approach to LGBTQ+ policies since decriminalizing homosexuality in 1997. One might question, against such a moment of silencing, the efficacy of an artist's turn to minute gestures and moments of contact. But Peng may have an answer to that ready in the exhibition's Chinese title, which would more directly translate as 'Moments Yet to Be Named'. Rather than a withdrawal, Peng's exhibition, to me, is a call to resistance: reminding us of the insurgent potential of the illegibility that continually returns to haunt wild and precarious things.



Peng Zuqiang, Keep in Touch, 2021, video still. Courtesy: the artist and Antenna Space, Shanghai

* Alvin Li is a writer, a contributing editor of *frieze*, and The Adjunct Curator, Greater China, Supported by the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation, at Tate. He lives and works in Shanghai, China.



THE TIME IT TAKES TO DO THINGS WITH TREMBLING HANDS \

SINDHU THIRUMALAISAMY

Program notes quickly turned into paper fans as we settled into the humid auditorium at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. We were gathered to watch films and videos made by the artists in residence. There were murmurs about the "long" film at the end of the program. Peng Zugiang's Nan was seventy-nine minutes long, said the notes.1 As the lights were dimmed, the programmers consoled us that "we would get through this together." Sighs came tenderly, as tacit acknowledgements that it was going to be an act of collective endurance. And though there are many reasons why audiences might not want to engage films with lengthy run-times, I was surprised that this reluctance showed up in a group of artists and in the exceptionally "free" time of a residency.

Zugiang describes Nan as being about economies of care.² It is filmed in Changsha, China in the house where his grandparents and uncle Nan live. The dynamics of care between family members, the products they buy, and the professional health services they use are detailed in scenes of daily life. In one of the first scenes, Nan attempts to transfer boiled drinking water from one plastic bottle into another. He is determined to complete this task despite his mother's warnings to wait till the water cools down. There was time for my thoughts to wander as the scene unfolded. I was reminded of how my grandfather would shuffle back and forth in the kitchen as he waited for my grandmother to finish preparing dinner. My grandmother, never one to rush herself, would cook at her own pace despite him repeatedly asking, "is it ready yet?" Their relationship, strained by their unchanging roles as caregiver and receiver, would often slip into petty arguments-like those between Nan and his mother. As he pours water from one bottle to another, Nan's hands tremble. His gaze is intent, as was mine, tracing the space from the mouth of one bottle to the other. They don't match up. Some water spills. His hands startle. I twitched. The water is scalding hot. The plastic crumples from the heat. I knew this frustration—as if time would run out. He tries again. Eventually, not perfectly but with finality, the water is transferred, and the scene ends.

Thirumalaisamy \ 15

It would be easy to write about Nan as a slow film. The scene I described would be considered "long" by many standards. But I want to hold that Zugiang's film is neither slow nor long. It simply unfolds at the pace with which Nan and his parents move through the world -rhythms to which anyone who is invited into their life would be asked to synchronize. Several scenes in the film follow Nan's actions in this way, sending some of our bodies out of sync. They challenge our chrononormativity.3 We learn about dis/ability not as symptoms in a body but as social relationships-physical and temporal relationships that we become implicated in. More than discerning the plot or story, the work that we do in these scenes is about syncing with others' rhythms. In other words, the work is durational. The film's runtime reveals little about the duration that is produced as we move through these encounters of difference. It makes some of us restless and others more relaxed. Whispers and yawns fill the auditorium during these scenes along with the fluttering of program notes. Thoughts and memories, not quite fixed as stories, take form beyond the screen.

Watching Nan in the humid auditorium brought back other memories of a summer that I spent at home in Coimbatore. I was recovering from dengue fever. Conversation was the only thing I had the energy for those days and my grandmother was there for it. I would lay on my back and chat with her as she read, did housework, and exercised. By that time, my grandfather had died. Following his death, she developed Parkinson's. Her hands trembled, like Nan's. Her body bent and refused to be timely in the ways that it had needed to be when she was taking care of her husband. In this period of her life, she negotiated new ways to spend her time, working with her tremors to avoid slipping into depression. She continued to cook for us though it took her more and more time to do so. Our eating habits changed. The rhythms of life at home changed. Everyone in the family had to learn to deal with Parkinson's even if it wasn't showing up in "our own" bodies.

A temporal experience of fragility not bound within one body—this is what I wanted to

explore that summer when I made the video poem cada flor tiene (every flower has).⁴ The work is a contribution to Lata Mani and Nicolás Grandi's The Poetics of Fragility, a transmedia project that "reclaims fragility as intrinsic to existence, not something to be bemoaned or overcome."5 cada flor tiene centers the sound of my grandmother peeling banana flowers and the conversation that blooms around this action. It uses sound and text to emphasize the rhythms of our exchanges as we talk about bodies and time. Our conversation unfurls like the petals, arriving at connections between a number of things-Parkinson's, work, nerves, air, honey, language, memory-"myriad intimacies, largely unknown."6 My grandmother likens the flowers to her own body as she peels them. She points out how tough they are; just like her nerves, she says. "They never soften no matter how much you cook them," she says, making me think about the hardness of the "dur" in duration and endurance.

Nan and cada flor tiene resonated for me because they both engage non-normative temporalities to reveal duration as a relational experience. They invite us to consider durational work as a collective effort to move beyond bodily, temporal norms. When Shadi Harouni presented *The Lightest of Stones* a few weeks later in the same auditorium, it became clearer to me that such engagements with duration push against expectations for films to move us through unfamiliar worlds.⁷

The Lightest of Stones is part of a trilogy of films that are set in a pumice quarry in Iranian Kurdistan. As international sanctions crush local industries and ISIS rises to power close by, the quarry and its workers, many of whom are Kurdish dissidents, stand in heavy stillness. The camera frames the artist unearthing rocks from the side of the cavernous mountain with her bare hands. Quarry workers stand gathered behind her, providing commentary. Their comments are laced with a dry humor that has sedimented over years of censorship and suppression. They joke about Shadi's industriousness, contrasting it with the quarry's state of dysfunction and their own uninterest in work. Details of a collective melancholia rise and fall without hurry. The

Thirumalaisamy \ 16

monumental mountain crumbles little by little as Shadi persistently claws at it. In spaces where censorship is normalized, absurdity and abstraction are necessary in order to speak, she said after the screening. Time is also necessary—she added—time to sit with things and to miss them. The film asks us to register that we are missing things as much as we are constructing narratives about the quarry and its workers.

The spectators within the film are also doing durational work. They know that the footage will eventually be seen by audiences "in America." They anticipate our gazes, guessing at how we might misread them. They mirror my own anxieties around not knowing where I stand in relation to what I am looking at. They joke about it. Then, a question comes up. "This is a documentary, right?" someone asks, as if the answer could give us some kind of clue about how to respond. Larger and larger rocks fall on Shadi but she continues to carve the mountain without looking back. It is her action that keeps the take going. "What kind of time is this?" one could ask. After several minutes of banter, the spectators can no longer ignore the silence of the film crew. Someone finally demands, "no, really, what kind of film is this?" The only microphone on location is pointed at them, they notice, and stop talking. The film ends but the questions remain.

What to do with experiences of shared time when they don't reveal cohesive narratives? When, rather, what they reveal is a lack? I try to hold on to a thought: we are not obligated as filmmakers to fill in that lack, least of all, with stories. I continue to think about what Zugiang, Shadi, and I are doing when we present these films far away from the places where we filmed them. We live and work between seemingly incommensurable contexts. How we choose to produce meaning does not rely on the assumed transmission of a story. Rather than trying to bridge the gaps between worlds with seamless storytelling, we move towards highlighting their differences. Duration is our tool to put bodily, social differences into relation. This is why I think that the time it takes to do things with trembling hands is neither slow nor long. Several things are happening when Nan

is pouring water from bottle to melting plastic bottle, or when my grandmother is peeling hundreds of banana flowers that each hold two drops of honey, or when Shadi is carving into the side of a mountain. To work with duration in these moments is to sit with not-knowing, to feel a difference, and to move with it. And, sometimes, such an experience of duration is the story.

ENDNOTES

1—*Nan*, dir. Zuqiang Peng (2019, digital video, 79 min).

2—"Nan," Peng Zuqiang, https:// pengzuqiang.com/nan.

3—Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities*, *Queer Histories*, Perverse Modernities (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 3.

4—cada flor tiene (every flower has), dir. Sindhu Thirumalaisamy (2016, digital video, 6 min).

5—*The Poetics of Fragility*, dir. Nicolás Grandi and Lata Mani (2016, digital video, 63 min).

6—The Autonomous Self, dir. Lata Mani, in The Poetics of Fragility (2016, digital video, 63 min).

7—*The Lightest of Stones*, dir. Shadi Harouni (2015, digital video, 16 min).

Thirumalaisamy \ 17



彭祖强: 还未命名的片刻 Peng Zuqiang: Hesitations

202

7.31-9.5.2021 天线的线/Objective, 上海 Antenna-Tenna Objective, Shanghai 展评 REVIEW

在电影《革命之路》《Revolutionary Road, 2008)的开头几分钟, 坐 在驾驶位上的弗兰克·惠勒想要伸 手揽住妻子爱波·惠勒的肩膀,对她 刚刚经历的失败话剧演出示以安慰。 这一尚未成为实际触碰的意图随即 变成压垮沮丧已极的爱波·惠勒的 最后一根稻草——他们随后在国道 的砾石路肩上激烈争吵起来,两人 生活史中积压的欲望与不满逐渐淹 注了"演出之后"这一情境的真空。 但从关怀——在电影的刻画中表现 为一种伴侣间的惯性——到突然迸 发的无措、刻薄直至恨意之间,存 在着一个无法精确定位的转折, 或 许它就在那次触碰意图的无限延宕 当中;那个柔韧的关窍是独特而难 以掌控的。

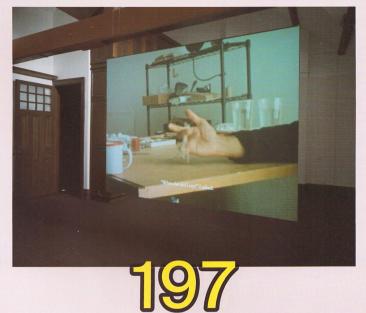
天线空间近期展出的彭祖强个 人项目"还未命名的片刻"为这个 关窍潜在的万千面貌提供了几张具 体的画像。展览所在的画廊临时合 作空间 Objective 位于一座竣工于 1920 年代的联排洋房,它在某些时 刻显得格外老旧,仿佛处于一种卸 除防备的状态。以超 8 胶片和高清 录像完成的一组影像《保联》《Keep in Touch,2020—2021)分布在洋 房的三层和四层,影片中细碎致密 的犹疑、低徊流转的沉默穿插在松 快闲谈和兀现的气场争夺之间,一 档绝非均匀但仍有所维系的情感转 速显然已经运行许久。

翻花绳是人们熟悉的童年游 戏: 数个回合之后, 绷绕在手指间 的线绳将不再能展现出新的图案或 由于一人的失误而彻底垮泄。在三 层被涂饰为紫色的房间中, 电视机 所播放的录像片段呈现了两人游戏 的过程, 而画外男声和女声传递的 谈话节奏也正是对"探索玩法"和 "维系游戏"之间脆弱平衡的二度 推演——他们语露机锋,分别讲述 自己与同为酷儿的他人的遭逢,缺 席的第三者和不算顺滑的交际经验 在这场轻快的谈话间显得生动非凡。 伴随背景声中时断时续的钢琴练习, 影像忠实地呈现着白色线绳在两人 手指间的穿梭。它遮蔽和牵引两具 身体的局部,在触碰的空白处敏锐 地暴露着这场游戏中的迟疑、错讹、 乞巧和妥协,并与谈话的许多点位 相和,共同完成试探的复构——我 们并不能确定交谈者即是游戏者, 但翻花绳在此处成为渗析着私隐的 交流的同位语。

楼上的空间悬挂着一张双面投 影幕布,分别呈现了两人互相修剪指 甲的片段和一次缺失了具体情节的 独白;仍然只有局部的身体,仍然是 不直接面向行动的言说。在屏幕一 侧, 叙事散句和随笔式的诘问以字幕 形式穿插在有来有往的修剪动作当 中, 调剂着它在主动交付和轻微暴 力之间的游移。观者依然能透过胶片 的颗粒感唤起对曲刃急欲进入指尖 深处的想象,身体因共感而不受控的 回缩继而提醒着信任与伤害之间那 道常常格外脆弱的边界。而屏幕另一 侧, 仅有肢体入镜的叙述者对一次网 络通话的残损记忆正通过其转笔的 断续与滞涩,直接指向交流的悬停。

翻花绳、转笔和剪指甲都可被视 作一种日常闲笔,它们作为最没有悬 念的行动,是私人生活常用的逗点。 但在《保联》中,当察觉到各种形式的 言说(交谈、独白、字幕留言)在特 定群体之间变得危险或难以起效、只 能遥望着它们已被稀释的对象时,这 些行动就成为情感的掩体,带着向外 延展和捕捉的欲念演化为主体放弃 直接言说后通向"更亲密"的一次试 锚。但它们也狡黠、机敏,随时预备 祛除那种探求情感进路或强烈认同

彭祖妃, 《保职》,2020—2021 年,参频录像 Peng Zuglang, *Keep In Touch*, 2020-2021, multi-channel video



彭祖廷。《保联》,2020—2021 年,参频录像 Peng Zuglang, *Keep In Touch*, 2020–2021, multi-channel video

In the opening scene of the film *Revolutionary Road* (2008), the protagonist Frank Wheeler, sitting in his car, attempts to wrap an arm around the shoulder of his

wife, April, to comfort her over an unsuccessful theater performance. His kind intent, not yet conveyed through physical touch, is the last straw for the distressed April. Bit by bit, their pent-up desires and frustrations fill the "postperformance" void. Eventually they find themselves in a heated argument by the side of the highway. However, between caring-which is shown as a habitual act between the couple in the movie-and the sudden outburst of helplessness. meanness and even hatred, there exists a turning point that cannot be precisely identified. Maybe it is hidden in the endless delay of that intended touch. This moment is specific but hard to pinpoint.

Peng Zuqiang's recent solo project Hesitations presented by Antenna Space transforms the potential countless facets of such moments into concrete images. The temporary collaborative gallery space hosting this exhibition is located in a townhouse built in the 1920s. In places, the



architecture looks dilapidated, as if in a state of unguardedness. The show consists of two works: a sculptural piece, and the fivechannel installation Keep in Touch (2021), which consists of moving images shot on Super-8 film and high-resolution recording, installed on the third and fourth floors of the townhouse. In the video, hesitations and reticence interweave with pleasantries and abrupt arguments, resulting in a long-running, uneven but connected emotional continuum.

Cat's cradle is a childhood game that many people are familiar with: after a few rounds, the strings wrapped around one's fingers have exhausted their possible patterns or get in a tangle all at once due to a player's mistake. On the third floor, in a room painted purple, a TV displays video footage of a game in progress between two people. Off-camera, a man and woman discuss the fragile balance between "exploring the



game's rules" and "keeping the game going"—their sharp and trenchant words addressing not the cat's cradle seen onscreen but their experiencing of queer otherness. The absent third

party and not-so-smooth communication make for an extraordinarily lively conversation. While a piano melody plays in the background, the video presents the movement of string between the two people's fingers. It conceals and pulls parts of the two bodies, acutely exposing the hesitation, stupefaction, calculation, and compromise in this game through blank space whenever the two come into physical contact. The movement corresponds to the ebb and flow of the dialogue as well. Together, they complete a compound structure of probing-we cannot be sure if the speakers are the two who are playing the game, but here the cat's cradle becomes a representation of communication in which intimacies are shared.

On the fourth floor hangs a double-sided projection screen, which shows footage of two people clipping fingernails for each other on one side and the delivery of a monologue lacking an obvious point on the other.

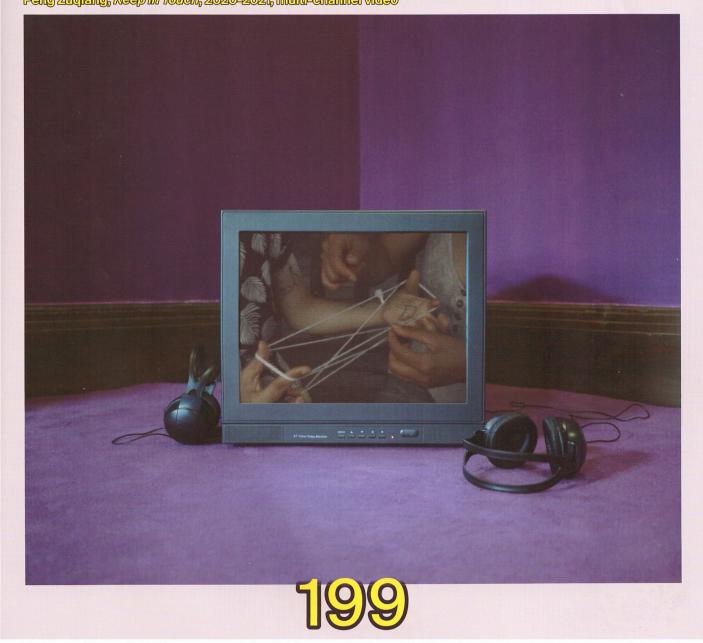
的意图,就像滤掉矿物质而得到一 杯不导电的纯水。

如同对翻花绳套路的熟谙一 般,我们太习惯使用已有定准的语 言,竟使原本直白的触碰和表达屈 于隐微;而延续这种触碰的困难和 艰涩又被语言埋植的固有程式所挟 裹,让人们不得不一再发明联结的 能指——甚至当人们由于文化和身 份的区隔而不能同处均质化的言说 空间时,沉默也成为高强度的表达。

洋房三层的另外两段录像即展 是观者在几段录像中能看到 现着沉默的诗意与张力:与窗外的 不多的完整面孔,细察之一 影遇强。《保晓》。2020—2021年。多频录像 Peng Zuglang, Keep In Touch, 2020-2021, multi-channel video

广玉兰树相映,位于阳台的电视机 播放着一位年轻女孩在林中小径涂 抹清凉油的录像片段。手腕、面部 穴位、颈后和脚踝,女孩神情舒缓, 仿佛这样的自我触碰与她的精神世 界之间正建立着某种牵引。而紧邻 楼梯转角的房间中传来的汽车引擎 声却像启动了一场微型战争——录 像中看上去似乎是亚裔和非裔的两 个男人在苍绿的树林中隔着车身寂 寂站立,不时抬眼打量着对方。这 是观者在几段录像中能看到的为数 不多的完整面孔,细察之下似乎能 见微弱的挑衅和压制在两人的神色 中轮次浮现;而他们始终一言不发。 《春光乍泄》珠玉在前,很难不引人 揣想这种对峙的微妙语境;即便观 众最终没能在限时长内看到任何明 确的情绪起伏,这样的不得其所和 戛然而止也指证着沉默同样可以丰 满而强烈。

如果仔细观看楼梯间顶部悬 垂而下的树脂扶手,我们会发现内 中隐隐印刻着 "pointing back to ourselves"(再次指向我们自己)。 这件注解般的小小装置表征着一切



Bodies are only partially shown; verbal expressions are made without any direct link to actions. On one side of the screen, narrative phrases and queries appear as subtitles interspersed among the dynamic nail-clipping actions, their tones wavering between voluntary submission and mild violence. The grainy texture of the film focuses the viewer's imagination on a curved blade cutting deep into a fingertip. Reacting with an involuntary jerk of the body, the viewer is reminded of the fragile boundary between trust and hurt. On the other side of the screen, the narrator, shown only as limbs and torso, recounts the fragmented memory of an online call. Images of a pen alternately spinning and still in the speaker's hand draw a direct analogy to a halting communication.

The playing of cat's cradle, the clipping of fingernails, and the spinning of a pen can all be seen as a kind of everyday scribble. As the most ordinary of actions, they serve as common respite in our private lives. However, in Keep in Touch, as the subjects become aware that their forms of communication (conversation, monologue, and subtitle) are dangerous and ineffective among specific groups and untransmittable toward their already diluted objects, the aforementioned actions are used to hide emotions. With an outwardly expanding desire, these actions are the preemptive search for a "more intimate" relationship after the subjects have

abandoned straightforward verbal expression. But they are canny and quick-witted too, always ready to get rid of the intentions that sought emotional approach or a strong sense of identity, like a cup of water becoming nonconductive after its minerals have been filtered out.

Akin to our familiarity with the patterns in cat's cradle, we are too accustomed to using formulated languages. The result is, to one's surprise, that originally straightforward

physical

touching and verbal expressions now become secondary to cryptic secretiveness. Instead, the difficulty and unpleasantness in the continuation of touch are hijacked by established linguistic programs, so that people have to keep inventing new signifiers for connectionseven when people fail to coexist in a homogenized verbal space due to their cultural and identity barriers, reticence becomes an intense expression as well.

The other two clips on the third floor of the townhouse demonstrate the poetic quality and tension of reticence: in a visual parallel to the magnolia trees outside the window, the TV placed on the balcony plays footage of a young girl on a park promenade applying cooling ointment to her wrist, the acupuncture point on her face, the nape of her neck and her ankles. The girl is at ease,

hinting at a

correlation being formed between the way she touches herself and her spiritual world. Meanwhile, the noise of an automobile engine coming from another room sounds like a small war being 🙈 waged. But really it is two men, one seemingly Asian

and the other Black, standing silently on opposite sides of a car parked in a vibrant green forest. From time to time they

scrutinize each other. This is one of the few moments in the video when the audience can fully see the faces of the protagonists. If viewers watch with close attention, they might see subtle provocation and suppression in the two men's facial expressions, but they remain tight-lipped throughout the video. Renowned film *Happy Together* (Dir. Wong Kar-wai,

X2

6

触碰所勾连的情动终将回返我身。 在时有发生的微小离散中,触碰和 躲闪所带来的情感虚焦诞育了一个 广袤的边缘,它存在于言说的一切 走向之外;这一承载敏感与不服从、 连缀着静默与暧昧的小小区域,通 向的是我们能求得的最熹微的自由。

而我并不相信品尝过这份自由 的人会不感怀于它的晞弱。当身在 这些叙事片段珠联而成的小气候中, 当不觉沉湎于对情境本身的细读, 我们会暂时忘记那个笔直的、喜好 确定的外部。诚然,这些还未命名的 片刻彼此边缘相触、相互打磨, 试 图逼近联结之所以复杂和脆弱的确 切内核;但它们也同时回避向确定 情绪的再度迈进,从而取消了绝对 的争执或疏远——后者却正是现实 中从未退散的情感态势。从某种程 度上而言,展览本身停驻于一种神 态,停驻于向观者敞开试探与内溯 的那扇窄门前。而在这种流连收束 之处,情动的瞬时成立和自我过渡 还是会返照粗糙的现实——它并没 有宽容到允许我们随意栖身于对替 代性交流的探索之中。因而,那些 暧昧瞬间编织的世界并不能如人所 愿地一直亲密和安全下去,对"此 间无事发生"的频频顾惜也容易将 真实的困局搅散在一派温柔混沌当 中。

一个实际问题是,当自带刻度 的言说仍作为绝对多数铺陈自身, 我们如何解读触感及其空失,如何 能够让"还未命名的"成为"不容 忽视的",以期逐渐打破度量的政 治?还是说,种种充满张力的沉默, 仍将是目前可见的最常用解? 1997) set the scene for this kind of cinematic articulation, so it is likely some in the audience had that film in mind while speculating on the elusive context of this confrontation. Although there is no obvious emotional turmoil in the video, the missing closure and abrupt ending prove that reticence can nonetheless be noisy and intense.

If one looks closely at the resin handrails hanging vertically at the staircase, they will find faintly engraved on the inside a line that reads, "pointing back to ourselves." Like a footnote, this tiny installation alludes to the fact that all emotional movements induced by touching eventually return to oneself. In those dispersions that happen sporadically, the emotional frustration evoked by touching and evading brings about a massive margin that exists beyond all forms of verbal expression. This small margin, which holds sensitivity and defiance, and links reticence with ambiguity, points to the bare minimum of freedom we should be pursuing.

But I do not believe that anyone who has experienced such freedom can resist its tenderness and delicacy. When we are immersed in this microclimate consisting of narrative passages, when we bury our heads unconsciously in the perusal of scenarios, we can temporarily forget about things that happened externally which have a straight and cleardefined preference. Undoubtedly, these moments that have yet to be defined collide and grind against each other, in an effort to approach the esse



complexity and fragility of connection. But at the same time they also avoid any further advance toward determined emotions, so as to cancel any absolute argument or estrangement-the latter is the emotional state that never fades away in reality. To some extent, the exhibition itself is stationed in a certain manner that positions itself between opening up to the audience and looking inward. But here the instant validation and selftransition of an emotional movement would still return to the rough reality-it cannot tolerate our exploration of alternative communications as we please. Therefore, a world constructed by ambiguous moments cannot remain forever intimate and safe, as we naively wish. Excessive ministering to the sentiment of "nothing happened just now" tends to understate the real dilemma as a haze of tender feelings.

To propose a practical question: when the calibrated verbal expressions still assume their roles as the predominant majority to reinforce themselves, how shall we interpret the sense of touching and its absence? How shall we turn the "unnamed" into the "unignorable" so that we can gradually overturn the politics of measurement? Or shall we say, these nebulous forms of tension-filled reticence still remain the most common solutions at this moment?

💪 Ren Yue

Translated by Lily Sun

▲ 任越

ANTENNA SPACE

天线空间 Antenna Space E-mail: info@antenna-space.com www.antenna-space.com