

Light Pavilion Project Q&A

Interviewer: Xu Chongbao

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Xu Chongbao: *Do the bottled drinks shown in “Gems” correspond to color revolution or does the adjustment tailors to a more sensible representation of the artwork?*

Liu Xinyi: At the beginning of the project I was quite curious whether it is possible to find corresponding colors for this “color revolution” on the market, and what visual message would it present once they are assembled. Then I discovered, strictly speaking, there are only seven colors in the color revolution, and their installation is insufficient to render into a color spectrum. I imagine that the consumption industry wish to promise its consumers with sufficient choices. Would the choices be more diverse, then the color combinations might be even more striking. Therefore, I added four other colors amongst those I have already chosen. It was indeed an adjustment, and interestingly, during this process, these newly added colors may almost respond to the ongoing “Arab Spring” movement, even though half of it was not given a romantic term by the international press due to various reasons. Fortunately, the ramification of the project extends my preconceived notion for color studies.

Xu Chongbao: *How have you come about to use the color system of bottled drinks as an analogy of the logic of color revolution in your creative process?*

Liu Xinyi: Once I have chosen the colors according to the ideas of the color revolution, I realized the color system corresponds to the advertisement strategy of goods in the modern consumer industry. In the science museum in the U.K, I learned that since innovative products made of petroleum, in particular the discovery of plastics among the industrial nation in the post 1960s, plastic has replaced the consumption of glass, metal, wood and has become a primary material for everyday commodities. These vibrant colored products occupy the mainstream of the market. People of my generation do not need to travel to developed countries such as those in Europe, Americas or Japan to be acclimatized with the visual messages that induce consumption. Therefore, I began to look for appropriate medium around me. Then I noticed the uniqueness of the Fast Moving Consumer Goods such as soft-drinks, because our consumption of it is not only nurtured by the industry’s artificiality, but its effect manifests in the consumer’s physical experience as its injected into the human digestive system. Let’s imagine various colors pass through our bodies, if one were to appropriate such interactive relationship to a political context, it would exceed one’s taste for various political novelties in this Internet era. At best, such derivation amounts to a conceptual experiment, I wished to present such leap through visual revisions in order to establish ambiguous relationships between these two irrelevant social products.

Xu Chongbao: *Compare to the color revolution, the colors of these bottled soft drinks lead one to make literal associations with the reality of the underclass and grass-root culture in China, in your conceptual system, what is the relationship between these colors and contemporary Chinese culture?*

Liu Xinyi: There is a certain degree of relevance between the color of the soft drinks and people's needs and wants. When I was choosing the samples, I discovered that choices of tea drinks and milk drinks are not any less than the colorful soft drinks. In the course of purchasing them, I was told that the sales of tea drinks are greater, and they are widely received than the fashionable colorful drinks. On the other hand, the bottled soft drinks I have chosen have a lower sales rate. According to a wholesale perspective, they are targeted at a smaller market, and one of the drinks might cease production as a result of its poor sales. Once I learned about this reliable market survey, I speculated that bright colors might not necessarily a natural lure for consumption. At least for the time being, such soft drinks are targeted at the young consumers looking for novelty and the middle-class families. Even though the producers of the soft drinks would like their product to transcend class as financially allowed, or even reach out to new consumer groups in spite of cultural gaps. Perhaps their targeted group also includes the children of the migrant workers and other social groups living on the urban peripheries. Industrial progress popularizes urban lifestyle, and its foreseeable outcome would be the largely neglected populations entering the spectrum of the existing economy and culture. Consequently, there will be growing attempts to attract these people culturally, for instance, in fashion, popular music and TV soap operas and etc. Moreover, their aesthetics should not be underestimated, because no one could stop them from criticizing the aesthetics of Top-level design.

Xu Chongbao: *Among your previous works, the identity of the artist were often obscured, and you have played the calm Agent L, whereas the Chinese characteristics of these bottled drinks and "Don't Forget to Vote" video repeats textbook-like slogans. Are you aware of the inescapable issue of identity politics?*

Liu Xinyi: Identity politics has always been the externally inclined interpretation I am trying to circumvent. Although it seems impossible, it is also unnecessary to completely avoid one's identity. For me, bottled soft drinks are exotic consumer item, and so are election policies. I could only isolate individual tendencies and prejudice attitudes, instead open up to issues I am concerned with as much as possible, and to examine its possibilities of discussion through exhibition. For instance, through the video in this exhibition, I would like to provoke borderless discussions on election policies, citizen politics and media manipulated politics. On the one hand, its imperative sentences may seem to remind the audience of his/her indefinite political rights, on the other hand, the set of enlarged human lips and the mechanical repetition of phrases instill pressure and confusion to the audience that propels him to question what is political freedom, and whether it can be protected by the given election policies.

Xu Chongbao: *In certain aspects, the vitality of contemporary art is determined by the urgency propelled from the questions discovered and under discussion. From this point of view, what are your comments on the Light Pavilion project and your other previous projects?*

Liu Xinyi: I am inclined to ride on the inertia of experimenting with my own methodology, and its

breakthrough may only be possible by adopting new issues and mentalities. Other than pushing forward the ideas in my existing projects, my work method seeks to learn from the curator's concerns and perspectives through collaborations of group exhibitions, and to incorporate them into my own semi-formulated ideas. The Light Pavilion project allowed me to appropriate the space to further explore those ambiguously existing issues. The low ceiling and lighting effect of the space offered me certain unreal on site experience, that made me recall upon the visual memories of European films and MV from my youthful years. Especially having lived in London for many years, I am especially aware that its properties belong to the modernist imagination absent of alternatives in those relatively closed-off eras. This distant virtual impression prompts me to discover the commingled experience of splendor, longing and confusion. Moreover, in my opinion, the integration of consumer culture with media politics offers infinite imaginations.

--Translated by He Xiao