

Chaoyang Qunzhong (The Chaoyang Masses) at A307

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Following the successful transformation of Beijing's contemporary art into a contemporary life style, is it possible for Beijing's contemporary life style to transform back into contemporary art? This is the perspective that intrigued me the most during the set-up of A307 Space in 798.

The high-rise apartment building harboring the space towers loftily at the entrance of this art district, yet its numerous traits expose it to be a residential building. Its style of refurbishing, the placement of the furniture, the elevator covered by a door and the adjoining tennis court, swimming pool and supermarket all hint tacitly at the acknowledgement of economic ideas and class of 1st tier cities. As an attempt to enter into the space of reality, my goal is to allow a kind of repulsive force as well as a gravitational force to form between A307 Space and its surrounding fixed state. In doing so, I invite a threefold relation to inhabit the space: the residential community and the 798 art-community; the apartment space and artistic practice; private volition and public demonstration.

How can one create an imitated perception that resembles the ready-made environment while at the same time giving an indication of the other reality in which one finds his or her self? Perhaps it would be feasible to superpose a 'simulacrum of life' onto the A307 art space. Apart from utilizing the objects that were readily present in the apartment, I also added some life props to the space that particularly befitted its vibe, among which were a plethora of replicas of objects.

The replicas imitate a representation of life. They are an embodiment of man's imagination regarding a certain way of living. Their existence has set in motion a genuine relation of supply and demand: book replicas that cannot be leafed through don't only incarnate demand of knowledge such as the study of Chinese classics, finance & economics, management, fiction writing, history, design and natural science, but they also accurately convey the psychological desire of gaining possession of and displaying a certain type of knowledge. In essence, a relation exists between popular fake plants and the metaphor of wealth. Boasting luxuriant branches and foliage, these fake plants are easy to maintain and never wither.

Placed on one side of the apartment are the book, fruit, vegetable, plant and caged bird replicas. On the other side, the dining table and chairs, sofa and end table, king-size bed and television set. As the objects begin to get in line, the objects begin to converse with the apartment. They keep indicating the age span, gender and career scope of the home's owner and even his/her willingness of acceptance of new things. From this point, an individual character starts to take on vividness and in turn fabricates the internal logic of the apartment. The help of the objects inside the apartment is required to further induce and unravel this individual imagination. Inside A307 there are a flat-screen TV and a TV cabinet. Beijing TV just so happened to broadcast a program called *Yang Shengtang* during the show opening. I downloaded an episode of the program, entitled *How to Discern High Blood Pressure*, and played it in loop on the television set. In A307 there was a portable *pingshu* (folklore radio play) audio-device left behind from a previous art project. I chose to relegate

it to its former duty and used it to play the first lecture taken from Shan Tianfang's *The Invincible Constable* (五鼠闹东京). The temperature and timeframe in the *pingshu*-performance ran synchronously to the live-proceedings of the show's opening. Following this keynote, the air-brushed images *What a Wonderful World* (江山如此多娇), *Yellow Chrysanthemums and Plump Crabs Yet Again Usher In Chongyang Festival* (菊黄蟹熟又重阳) and *The Snow-capped Great Wall* (雪长城) were called forward to respectively adorn the empty walls at the rear of the dining room, the sofa and the bed.

The image of an upright and precautious citizen equipped with a profound sense of social responsibility emerges to the surface. This incited me to borrow the name *Chaoyang Qunzhong* (the Chaoyang Masses) - whose meaning has been broadened in recent years - and use it as the title for my current project. The purpose of borrowing this term is to give play to the ambiguity of its discourse and to provide a series of flexible sets of relations. For example, it can refer to both individuals and the masses; it can be a symbol and at the same time be grounded in reality; it is the object of the project, while at the same time referring to on-the-spot participation by the audience; it can be an incentive for exploration while also hinting at futility.

With the illusion of life grafted onto the space undoubtedly being exposed after the visiting public's increasingly profound screening of this particular individual character, the surface narrative is inflicted with self-subversion. If we state that the on-the-spot comical "evidence chains" demonstrate that it is possible for an individual's life to be freeze-framed by these objects' representations, then "the Chaoyang Masses" who rush to the scene aren't necessarily able to fully regain possession of their dominance over these objects. The reason for this is that apart from such descriptions or definitions as "(in-)authenticity", "property", "objects" or even "temporal-spatial filler content" vested in them by us, not much else can be done. Ever since these objects made up of timber, minerals, crude oil and other industrial raw materials began to exist in this world they couldn't have expected to become endowed with the significance markers of the human world. On the contrary, human behavior is precisely as follows: to actively affix significance markers to objects throughout the process of production, purchasing, display and observation. Network correlations between objects have been around since long, and opportunities have existed all along to give an account of the historical legacy of the "masses" from the perspective of objects.

---Translated by Sid Gulinck