

Liu Xinyi: Hundred Thousand Miles Away

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Two years after the artist's exhibition "Goulash" in White Space, "Hundred Thousand Miles Away" is Liu Xinyi's first exhibition in the gallery that uses both spaces of the gallery. The two chapters together form a critical visual essay on global socio-political situations that is meticulously structured, and is not stingy with puns.

Greeting the visitors by the door is a token of contemporary terrorist abjection, *Safety First* (2016): three piles of security checkpoint plinths (on which everyone of us will be touched and searched) form in its totality three medal podium, one higher than the other. While body search plinths suggest an absolutely equality that is curiously guaranteed by national distrust, medal podiums as found in Olympics provoke exactly the opposite: a promoted, celebrated inequality that is supported by, instead of shame and fear, national pride and glory.

The two chapters then dwell upon different yet related topics. Experienced in one is a simulacrum of false international mobility, and caricatures marking the impossibility of it. *The Road of Arab Ba'ath Movement* (2016) is literally a group of four operating boom barriers going up and down in short intervals, but the booms are replaced by four targets of controversial leaders: Mubarak, Assad, Gaddafi and Saddam. Amusing is the fact that these are in one way or another "old friends" of Chinese people, and the fact that by working on controlling the in-and-out of the crowds, they are instrumentalised as effectively tools, not leaders. Besides the face value of the work that is entertaining, suggested is possibly their ever-changing role (though some are dead already) as not an end in themselves, but a body that has to constantly take orders from others. Thematically, along with this four fearsome guys, works dealing with the modern logic of in-and-out are the *Nine Segments of Sausage* (2016), marking the controversial southern border of China with nine sausages; and the *Wonderland* (2016), a customs control booth in the shape of a street vending cart. The predicament of in-and-out is here exposed: where to? what for? And more importantly: is the image of repetitive penetrations - even as a sexual

movement as Bataille has it, suggesting the world is driven by the force of wheels and pistons as embodied in the movement of locomotives - along with hymen (as border and control, or birth control, for that matter) still an appropriate descriptive and injunctive metaphor in the world of post-globalisation?

Continuing from the first to the second space is a series of reliefs titled *Block Trading Empire* (2016). Directly it re-invents animals, liberating signifiers from the signifieds: Australian Camel / African Kangaroo / North American Wild Donkey / South American Rooster - stereotypes are shuffled and the unlikelies are matched. The impossibility of the image of African Kangaroo verges very much towards the conceptual aspect of Liu's practise that has long been established. The *Palmyra* (2016) and the *Royal Balcony* (2016) deals different ways of seeing: mediated exchanges (or simply one-way, pouring inputs) or decorated, ceremonial spectacles - these two works together form a very interesting relationship, but the in situ theatrical effect created by this relationship has not rendered the two motifs less cliché. The giant passport *Confident Citizenship* (2016) is just a dream item to have. Lastly, the *Charles I* (2016) was created in Liu's signature method of deliberate confusion, relating the recent attack on and defence of the Charlie Hebdo (the sensational line of "JE SUIS CHARLIE"), to the king of Charles I ("JE SUIS CHARLES I"). Political incorrectness par excellence, but appropriate and proper, at a time when the historical dismemberment of the European Union has just been started by the despicable Brits, to whom both Liu Xinyi and me are grateful for the excellent education it provided. Just when the artist is anticipating half-heartedly escaping from the present global aporia, I wonder, like a girl friend used to say to me, regarding the relationship with her boyfriend: "how could we possibly reconcile?" Somebody messed up the work and put down "Jerusalem" when I was there, and I did not find it less amusing.