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王浩然： 被挖掘的『伪经』 EXCAVATED APOCRYPHA: THE ART OF ADRIAN WONG



左 LEFT

《伞王，我一定会找到你》

2010年，木头、层压材料、
竹子、塑料皮革、合成树脂
现场戏剧表演（30分钟）
4 x 3 x 3.5米

Umbrellahead, I Will Find You

2010, wood, laminate, bamboo,
pleather, melamine
live theatrical performance (30 min.)
4 x 3 x 3.5 m

艺术家王浩然是一名视觉伪经的考古学者，
他从香港电影、都市传说以及
当代社会问题中提炼代表这座城市的象征符号，
将其转化为混合的艺术品
雕塑、行为和装置。

Artist Adrian Wong is an archaeologist of visual
apocrypha, taking the symbolic iconography of Hong
Kong, from cinema to urban myth to contemporary
social issues, and tweaking it into composite art
objects: sculptures, performances, and installations.

香港，披着玻璃和钢铁筑成的闪亮外衣，长期浸润在深厚的电影视觉传统中，并将它与城市旅游业结合得天衣无缝，一座这样的城市从来不缺都市景观。在王家卫和吴宇森的经典银幕作品里，城市的表面主要透过结构上的定义浮现：汗津津的霓虹灯光照在湿漉漉的人行道上，女装上森密繁复的花纹斜倚着红色的漆质家具，从窗外望去一片雾气濛濛的山景。另一方面，这座城市的集体躯干通过不断扩张的象征符号库呈现在世人眼前，这些符号只和数量有限的一系列银幕人物有关；也就是说，几十个富有魅力的演员主宰影坛数十载，他们之间经过无数次排列组合，再辅以各种神奇的道具和其他物品，共同建造了一个文学虚构中的香港，这座城市作为文化连续体的神话就这样世代相传。避风塘里的渔船、小游轮、电车、旗袍、狮子山、武侠世界的刀光剑影、南方的烧烤、粤剧面谱、吸血鬼的獠牙、金箔纸钱、灯笼——单子可以无穷无尽地开下去，但这些特征已经比任何居住区、名人或建筑风格更加成功地代表了香港的集体视觉身份。

王浩然吸收并重新消化了这些神奇的象征符号，并常常深入到电影领域借用叙述，重构对话，建造超现实但富有标志意义的各种场景。然而，对于王浩然来说，这些物品的主要社会价值并不来自其表征性质，而在于它们提供的大量编造荒唐故事的可能性以及随之呈现出的形式美学特征。他的作品最重要的一个方面是，作者似乎有意与这些被掏空的能指调情，让物体与叙事、图像与背景之间的联系出现松动，以此回馈催生它们的文化母体，尽管表现方式是透过一种整体性感力对上述视觉特征进行高度风格化、审美化（但绝不符号化）的描述。

从某种程度上说，王浩然之于离奇的香港传统街头文化就像后现代绘画和拼贴作品里的挪用艺术家之于全球垃圾文化，通过国际艺术界畅通的流通渠道实实在在地为自

Characterized by a reflective architecture of glass and steel and culturally dominated by a visually rich cinematic tradition that merges seamlessly with tourism marketing, Hong Kong does not lack for specular images of its urban core. In the now-classic films of Wong Kar-Wai and John Woo, the surface of the city emerges primarily through textural definition: the sweaty glint of neon on wet pavement, the contrast of floral patterned gowns against red lacquer furniture, the misty hillside just beyond the window. The collective body of the city, on the other hand, is presented through a constantly expanding archive of symbols that are attached to a restricted set of personae; that is to say, whereas the same group of some two dozen admittedly charismatic actors have dominated the silver screen for several decades, they have endured countless permutations through affiliation with a large number of talismanic props and other objects that construct the imagined community of literary Hong Kong as a myth of enduring cultural continuity. There are the small fishing boats in the typhoon shelters, the ferries, the electric trams, the *qipao*, Lion Rock, martial arts swords, southern barbecue, Cantonese opera masks, vampire teeth, paper sacrifices, triad cleavers, lanterns—the list is almost inexhaustible, and yet these features have come to stand in for the collective visual identity of Hong Kong in a way that no particular neighborhood, celebrity face, or architectural style could.

Adrian Wong absorbs and regurgitates these talismanic symbols in altered form, venturing often into filmic territory to borrow narratives, reconstruct dialogues, and



《生日快乐》，2008年

木头、福米加抗热塑料薄板、地毯、泡沫、毛毡、气球、鱼干
数码录像，5 x 5 x 4米

Sang Yat Fai Lok, 2008, wood, formica, carpeting,
foam, felt, balloons, dried fish
digital video, 5 x 5 x 4 m



《和玉烧腊店》，2009年

木头、层压材料、玻璃、橡胶、
合成树脂、鸭子填充标本
6 x 4 x 4米

From the Annals of the Harmony Jade Roast Meat Society, 2009

wood, laminate, glass, rubber,
melamine, animatronic ducks
6 x 4 x 4 m



己的表现对象注入了新的活力。在这个过程中起关键作用的是整体意象和具体图像的同时生产：艺术家在他大部分作品中都把布景理解为文化生产的现场，为作为他的原材料来源的微观文化提供不太连贯但是必需的营养。例如，大型装置《生日快乐》（2008）就建立在对本土电视节目的研究之上。这些节目包括《加尔文园地》、《儿童园地》和《生日快乐》，都拍摄于1960到1975年，原来的拷贝都已散失。王浩然发现自己原来和节目主持人Calvin Wong Hay有亲缘关系，于是对当时的节目展开了一系列谱系和电视视觉研究，利用家庭相片、制作图片和报纸档案库创造了一整套布景，其中包括颜色鲜艳的布袋戏舞台，20世纪中期的家具，画着树木、怀旧的淡彩墙壁，比真人还大的粉色海豚毛绒玩具以及鱼干等等。王浩然在这个布景里重新录制了几期儿童节目，屏幕上，红光满面的艺术家自己担任主持人，讲述过去的故事，这样留下的一系列照片通过协商调整把一种已经灭绝的视觉文化带入历史文献库，同时也转换为当代艺术对当下的记录。

另一方面，他的几乎所有项目都会用到静止图像，为美学欣赏提供若干非常具体的评估对象。其中一件作品在香港媒体上引起轩然大波：南中国禽流感盛行期间，王浩然公布了一张照片，照片上他正把一只公鸡揽在怀里亲吻。艺术家试图以此超越人们内心对不纯粹生命形式根深蒂固的恐惧，正是因为这种恐惧，全城人听到上面一点风吹草动就要封杀本地食材。《吻鸡》（2007）这件短小的行为作品实际用的是一只刚刚宰杀、还未拔毛的死鸡，并非像艺术家开始宣称的那样是一只经过训练的活鸡；但这张照片至今仍在四处流传，作为一个实例说明当代艺术与社会问题的隔离。就图像的地位来说，也许这件作品最重要的特点在于对数码相片本身恒定表象的依赖，而这种表象可以，也经常和孕育它的观念叙述母体分离。同样，王浩然在最近的作品《陈词滥调系列1-4》（2010年）中，将自己一天之内消费的所有食品都拍下来，其中包括点心、茶餐厅的面、烤羊排和新鲜蔬菜，借此

build up surreal yet iconic settings. For Wong, however, the social value of such objects lies not as much with their representative qualities as with the possibilities for absurd story-telling and formal aesthetic features that they offer. The most significant aspect of his growing body of work is its willingness to play fast and loose with the hallowed if commonplace signifiers of culture and identity, loosening the binds between object and narrative, image and context in a way that contributes back to the parent culture even as it presents highly stylized and aestheticized (but never iconic) depictions of these visual styles to an imagined theatrical audience via a vaguely universal and totalizing sensibility. In some ways, Wong does for the quirky traditional street cultures of Hong Kong what the appropriation artists of post-modern painting and collage did for global trash culture, sincerely lending it new life by way of circulation throughout the well-lubricated channels of the international art world. Key to this process is the simultaneous production of both imagery writ large and images in the particular: in much of this work, the artist brings forth an understanding of the scene as a site for the manufacture of culture, providing needed if incoherent nourishment for the microcultures from which he draws raw contextual material. There is, for example, his large-scale installation *Sang Yat Fai Lok* (2008), which builds upon research into local television programs *Calvin's Corner*, *Children's Corner*, and *Happy Birthday*, all of which were shot between 1960 and 1975 but of which there are no remaining copies. After discovering family ties to host personality Calvin Wong Hay, Wong engaged in genealogical and televisual research into the programming of that time, employing family photographs, production stills, and newspaper archives to create a set containing a brightly colored



再度向观众提出质疑，敦促观众重新思考自己是否在不知不觉中成为构建香港神话的同谋者。这些摆放极不自然的易腐食品以一片颜色鲜艳，风格复古的印花桌布为背景，通过图像结构获得了只属于它们自己的生命，同时，该作品又由于具备了作为照片被挂到画廊墙上的新功能而达到了主体间性的自觉意识。

王浩然的艺术实践手法在整个华人地区并不多见，他的很多作品事先都经过严格的调查研究，极其讲究方法论，并从他的学术背景——儿童心理学、语言学 and 人类学——中汲取了大量灵感。尽管王浩然不喜欢在最后的作品中透露任何原始数据或文献材料，而更愿意利用现成的手工艺或大家非常熟悉的技术来表达主题，但他经常花费数月实践准备一件大作品，采访大量相关人士及其后代，阅读各种现存文献，仔细挖掘香港目前所有的电影和文字资料。《生日快乐》就是这方面的明显一例，大型装置《和玉烧腊店》（2009年）亦是如此。《和玉烧腊店》是艺术家与WordAsia出版社合作开展的一次覆盖面广泛、具有内在历史价值的研究项目。该项目表面上作为庆祝香港电影诞生一百周年的作品对外展出，艺术家试图重建香港首部商业电影《偷烧鸭》的背景历史（该片由梁少坡导演，罗兰·万维沙掌镜，获得了本杰明·布拉斯基的资金支持）。在最终完成的装置中，一对电动鸭子标本分别站在两个高台上，背后墙上的花纹取自当地非常流行的纸杯上的图案。王浩然的这番阐释围绕原片制作中的某些方面提供了一次无厘头、片段式的对话。传说《偷烧鸭》这部片子里隐藏着有一套经过编码的秘密信息，目的是通过在旧金山以及其他革命据点放映传播推翻清政府的讯息；此处，这种虚构的符号系统转化为营养丰富的土壤，催生了一系列跨越时空的文化编码、传播和翻译的思考和观念。最近，有证据表明，这些经常互相矛盾的传奇叙述并不符合事实：影片拍摄于1914年，在这之前，同样的制作团队至少已经拍过四部电影，而清朝的末代皇帝也早就被推翻了。

这种对记忆的挖掘和针对媒体制品的考古学研究在他

puppet stage, midcentury furniture, nostalgic pastel wall images depicting trees, a larger-than-life-sized stuffed pink dolphin, and dried fish—among other things. Recording reconstructed episodes of the program on this set, a disconcertingly enthused Wong himself appears as the host in his own interpretation, leaving behind in documentation a series of photographs that negotiate an extinct visual culture into a position equally at home in the historical archives and in the contemporary art records of the present.

On the other hand, virtually all of his projects also involve still images that specifically and concretely offer objects for aesthetic appreciation as if they were sacrificial dioramas served upon the altar of the audience. In a stunt that made him infamous amongst the chattering classes of the Hong Kong media, Wong released a photograph of himself kissing a chicken around the height of the avian influenza scare in south China, attempting to push past the ingrained fears of impure biological life forms that sees an entire population reject its local sources of food at the slightest warning from above. Entitled *Sak Gai* (2007), this brief performance actually made use of a freshly slaughtered but not yet plucked chicken carcass rather than the trained, live bird he originally claimed; nevertheless, the photographic image continues to circulate today, particularly as an example of the alienation of contemporary art from social concerns. In terms of the status of the image, this project may be most significant for its reliance on the unchanging semblance of the digital photograph itself, which can be and often is easily separated from the conceptual narrative from which it originally emerged. Similarly, a recent project known as *Bromide Series 1-4* (2010) involves photography of every food item consumed by the artist over the course of a single day, again interpellating the viewer as an accessory to the mythologies of Hong Kong through the predictable inclusion of comestibles like *dim sum* and *cha chaan teng* noodles alongside barbecued lamb chops and fresh vegetables. Posed in a highly artificial manner against a textured infinity wall



《陈词滥调系列3》，2010年，照片，24 x 26厘米
Bromide Series III, 2010, c-print, 24 x 36 cm



左 LEFT
 《保佑所有进入此地的人》，2007
 松木、竹子、环氧树脂、胶乳、
 香、茶、驱鬼道士
 12 x 12 x 3米
Bless All Ye Who Enter Here, 2007
 pine, bamboo, epoxy, latex,
 incense, tea, Taoist exorcists,
 12 x 12 x 3 m

右 RIGHT
 《吻鸡》，2007年，行为
Sak Gai, 2007, performance 100 x 100 cm

2010年的作品《伞王，我一定会找到你》中再度出现。这件合作完成的剧场作品在正式演出之前，艺术家已经对殖民早期香港西区的城市状况进行了全面深入的历史考察。王浩然和他的合作者在为一个遗产保护项目采访该地区居民的过程中发现，人们不断提到一个叫Lei Mei的女演员，据说她长得非常美，当时在香港家喻户晓，拥有大量粉丝，后来去了西方国家，经历了一场不幸的婚姻，最终年纪轻轻死在精神病院里。事实上，整个故事都是中文媒体虚构出来警告民众小心西方社会流毒的；但接受采访的几个老居民似乎真的相信这个子虚乌有的人物嫁给了一个表亲的表亲，或引诱了一个朋友的朋友。这种美丽的记忆总是有顽强的生命力，王浩然从中找到了某种快乐，并将整个故事转化为一场超现实的舞台剧，雨伞（指涉项目采访到的最后一名专业伞匠）和乐器盒（这些乐器在“文化大革命”结束后就已经绝迹）都成为剧中角色。舞台布景夸张的颜色和建筑构造再次提供了一个场景，这些象征物的具体形象在其中既像指示历史遗失之物的疏离幻影，又在本土记忆和国际艺术节的语言领域取得了一定成绩。

另一系列作品，包括《保佑所有进入此地的人》（2007）、《同鬼玩》（2007）和《四/死》（2005），则围绕一种更加私人的体验展开，艺术家的调查对象从古老神秘的本地文化开始，一步步延伸至经济和信仰在更广泛层面上的影响力。王浩然的工作室在一间被人谣传闹鬼的废旧厂房，自从搬进去之后他就霉运不断，先是个人物品丢失，然后是莫名其妙开始又莫名其妙痊愈的内出血。这段经历促使他动手研究许多香港人笃信的鬼神系统和相关仪式。《同鬼玩》经过一番全面调查，收集了大量道教或其他神秘仪式的清单和解释文本，艺术家在将其挂在墙上的同时，还把仪式需要用到的各种草药、石头等其他实物放在旁边的桌子上。《保佑所有进入此地的人》将这一思路推到了某种极端。在这件作品中，王浩然邀请了一帮道士到空间来驱鬼。整个过程中，艺术家本人一边尽力感受，一边保持不相信的态度，他始终未能确定是否应该或者何时应该向这些通过闹鬼或其他异事操纵房地产市场等经济领域的超自然力量投降。

of bold, slightly retro cloth prints, these perishable objects take on a life of their own exclusively through the composition of the image, gaining the consciousness of intersubjectivity through their newfound immanent ability to pose as portraits on the gallery wall.

Almost uniquely within the artistic practices common throughout greater China, Adrian Wong develops many of these projects through a rigorous research-based methodology that draws from his academic background in child psychology, linguistics, and anthropology. Although never willing to divulge the abstractions of data and archival material in his final work, preferring to work through adapted techniques of craft and kitsch, Wong often spends months in preparation for major projects, carrying out interviews with involved figures and their descendants, reading through the existing literature, and delving into what filmic and textual archives exist in Hong Kong. *Sang Yat Fai Lok* clearly evinces such methods, as does the landmark installation *From the Annals of the Harmony Jade Roast Meat Society* (2009), a part of a broad research program with its own intrinsic historical value developed in conjunction with Word Asia Publishing House. Exhibited ostensibly on the occasion of the centenary of fictional film in Hong Kong, the project attempts to reconstruct the dialogue and contextual history of the first such movie, entitled *Stealing a Roast Duck* and directed by Liang Shaopo with the funding of Benjamin Brodsky and the cinematography of Roland Van Velzer. Ultimately taking the form of two animatronic ducks on a campy formica podium against a background of patterned panels derived from a popular style of locally produced paper cups, Wong's interpretation offered a crass and by no measure comprehensive conversation revolving around certain aspects of the production of the film. According to legend and later anecdotal interviews, *Roast Duck* involved an intricate

这些象征物就像无根的幻影，
于历史已经散失，但对本土记忆
和国际艺术界形式语言来说，
无疑是新增的成绩。

These symbolic objects appear as detached
apparitions of something lost to history
but gained on behalf of both local memory
and the vocabulary of forms within the
international art world.



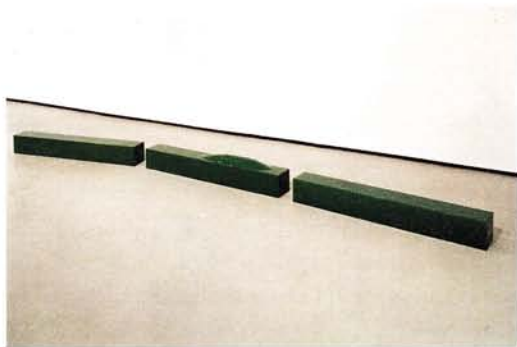
这件作品在文化上成为可能，甚至可读都是因为王浩然的个人身份。在美国出生长大的他与香港一直保持着家庭的联系。然而，王浩然并没有沉迷于这类特权身份政治的松散和断裂，而是充分利用自己作为一名过路的外来者的位置，以某种不离不弃的态度接近那些平时绝少被人提及的禁地，比如《保佑所有进入此地的人》中的驱鬼仪式以及《吻鸡》里与“禽流感带菌体”的亲密切接触。这一位置使得艺术家可以从那些他无法完全理解或信任的更广泛的社会系统中提取任何值得注意的美学内容，从描绘的活动出发表达一种异化疏离之感，同时使其更加接近于他的老本行：雕塑和心理学。很多作品题目都用粤语的罗马字母拼音写成，这种只在广东省、香港、澳门以及部分海外华人社区使用的方言并没有规定明确的音译系统；语言上的暧昧不明往往会把一定程度的阐释截住，然后转移到作品本身的立场上。《黑社会和猫仔》（2007）就是其中一例。在这部短片中，四个赤裸上身的文身男与一只小猫共舞，舞蹈明显经过编排，男人们的动作时而温柔小心，时而充满暴力。该作品以一种荒诞不经的手法重新诠释了港产电影里已成定式的黑社会形象。

在其他作品里，表演教练的帮助取代了此处编舞的专业辅导，从中可以看出创作者对身份的外部经验深感兴趣，而影响这种身份经验的有两股力量：在第二语言社会里对自我的主体描绘以及心理分析中客体化的失败。例如，《同我地玩》（2007）找了三个从大陆偷渡过来的孕妇，经过专业表演教练的培训，让她们在镜头前演出她们认为在香港人眼里的大陆人应该是什么样子。这几个女人坐在一张小桌子旁，不断骚扰来访的人加入她们的麻将会，对她们的赌友则要么打趣要么折磨。由于法律限制，这段行为表演没有留下任何录像，只有照片再度成为这件作品的证据和代表。妇女们一

set of coded messages intended to facilitate the overthrow of the Qing regime in Beijing to be circulated through San Francisco and other revolutionary enclaves; such apocryphal notations here function as fertile ground for ruminations on ideas of cultural codes, transmission, and translation across both time as space. Appropriately, many of these always controversial claims have recently been proven false: the film was actually at least the fourth film produced by the team involved in the year 1914 alone, well after the last Qing emperor was deposed.

This process of the excavation of memory and archaeology of media artifacts surfaces again in *Umbrellahead, I Will Find You* (2010), a cooperative theatrical production that reached the stage only after groundbreaking research into the historical urban conditions of Western District in the earliest colonial settlements of Hong Kong. While interviewing residents of the area for a heritage-based project, Wong and his collaborators noted repeated reference to the story of a certain Lei Mei, a stunning actress who attained wide recognition and won many admirers locally before traveling to the West, entering a disastrously infelicitous marriage, and ultimately dying young in an asylum. As it happens, this entire story is an apocryphal didactic tale concocted by Chinese-language media in order to warn against the moral evils of profane Western ways; that a number of the elderly residents interviewed seemed to sincerely believe that this fictional character had married a cousin of a cousin or seduced a friend of an end could never be substantiated. Finding a certain pleasure in the tenacity of such beautiful memories, Wong transformed the tale into a surreal stage play in which objects like umbrellas, in reference to one of the last professional umbrella craftsman interviewed for the project, and the cases of musical instruments no longer existing since the Cultural Revolution, become characters in their own right. The exaggerated colors and architectural construction of the stage set once again provide a scene on which the specific images of these symbolic objects appear as detached apparitions of something lost to history but gained on behalf of both local memory and the vocabulary of forms within the international art world.

Another series of works, including *Bless All Ye Who Enter Here* (2007), *Tuhng Gwai Wan* (2007), and *Seih* (2005) circulates around a more personal experience of never-quite-archaic local culture that later expanded into a full-fledged investigation of the wider forces of economy and belief. Working out of an industrial studio widely understood to be haunted, Wong suffered a series of misfortunes ranging from the loss of personal belongings to massive and medically inexplicable internal bleeding that stopped as suddenly as it had begun, leading him to engage with the systems and rites of superstition in the popular mindset. *Tuhng Gwai Wan* collects, through an extensive research-based process, a tex-



左 LEFT
《巨蟒（消化中II）》，2005年
MDF、聚苯乙烯树脂、环氧树脂
365 x 15 x 15 厘米
Boidae C. Constrictor
(*Mid Digestion II*), 2005
MDF, polystyrene, epoxy resin
365 x 15 x 15 cm

右 RIGHT
《泉：100度高温下分解的有机材料》，
2007年
盘子、碟状器皿、充气泳池、
乌龙茶、抽水机
Fountain: Organic Material
Breaks Down at 100° Celsius, 2007
found dishes and flatware,
inflatable pool, oolong tea, pump

边抓着麻将牌一边表演香港的大陆妹，她们在这些图像中既处于社会分配给她们的身份之内，也处在该身份之外。类似的夸张举止在新的系列作品《情感肖像》（2010）里也有出现：表演教练教拍摄对象表现某种情感，有时通过回忆某段特别痛苦的往事，有时通过其他修辞手段，拍摄对象由此呈现出的情绪也给人不同程度的真实感，又一次将投射源锁定在某个外在于表现对象自身认识范围的身份或行为。所有图像都装裱在类似晶体结构的立体相框里，从而加强了干扰的效果，除了表现后现代模式里常见的碎片式身份，更进一步强调了该系列作品所严重依赖的图像本身早已不再稳定。

虽然王浩然在他的艺术生涯初始阶段创作了一系列极少主义风格的雕塑，尤其是《巨蟒》（2005）——外形看上去好像被分成三块的蛇，以及《我爱你但我不能和你在一起》（2005）——作品以高度形式化的手段表现了浴缸里的金鱼，但后来他逐渐转向更复杂的表现方式。极少主义当然和戏剧格格不入，而这些华丽铺张、根据历史资料研究得来的布景和表演最能表现的就是活生生的故事叙述。然而，叙述被规定为场景的元素之一，以便提炼并处理所讲故事的整体性，将其化为一组组图像。尽管这些图像从来不是为变成表征符号而准备，但它们仍然起到了象征性流通物的作用，并从这个角度对当代文化和艺术做出了自己独有的贡献。最关键的一点是，历史和身份的角色由于弥漫在他大部分作品中的那种自觉的幽默而变得不那么沉重，从《和玉烧腊店》里的鸭子到《管状视》（2008）里艺术家本人的结肠镜检查录像，再到《泉》（2006）里对人们吃大排档时用茶水涮洗餐具这一习惯的调侃，无处不透着喜剧效果——这无疑是在作者应对多重身份的一种策略，就跟粤语拼音制造出来的疏离感是一个道理。正是这些喜剧元素使王浩然得以超越戏剧和后极少主义互相排斥的专属领地，同时进入一个独特的文化区域，既不落入香港现有的、以身份为基础的艺术实践之俗套，也不受限于艺术家另一个故乡——洛杉矶流行的形式主义创作之窠臼。他创作的图像丰富多彩，动静结合，单双兼备，持续不断地为那些拒不承认它们是真正艺术品的象征秩序输入价值；它们作为意象的身份其实更加巩固了它们所携带的观念，这些观念将在防御式文化结构中继续深入，哪怕这些结构一开始将它们拒之门外。

tual list and explanation of various Taoist and other mystical rituals positioned alongside a table bearing all of the bizarre herbs, stones, and other physical materials involved in such events. Pushing the project to an extreme, *Bless All Ye Who Enter Here* invites Taoist priests to perform an exorcism to clarify the space. Throughout all this, Wong himself maintains an attitude of sympathetic disbelief, never sure if or when to give in to faith in the supernatural forces that manipulate the real estate market and other economic fields through hauntings and other uncanny events.

This particular project is culturally possible and even legible largely due to Wong's personal identity, raised in the United States but maintaining a range of familial connections to Hong Kong. Far from indulging in the incoherence of such privileged identity politics, however, Wong tends to utilize this position as a passing outsider to his advantage, approaching with a certain sense of detachment forbidden territory that is typically spoken of in deadly seriousness or not at all, as with the exorcism of *Bless All Ye Who Enter Here* and the avian intimacy of *Sak Gai*. This position allows the artist to extract any notable aesthetic content from wider systems that he may not fully understand or trust, contributing to a sense of alienation from the activity depicted while bringing it into closer contact with his own training as a sculptor and psychologist. Many of the titles of these works consist of romanized Cantonese, a language with no definite alphabetic transliteration system of its own spoken only in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong, the regions of Hong Kong and Macau, and their respective diasporas abroad; this linguistic ambiguity, as confusing for readers of Chinese as for the totally uninitiated, tends to hold back a certain measure of explication that is then shifted to the position of the work itself. *Haak Seh Wuuh Tuhng Mau Jai* (2007) is one such example, a short video of an obviously choreographed dance in which four shirtless, tattooed men delicately and occasionally violently dance with a small cat: in translation, the title should read "Triads with Kitten," an



absurd reframing of the gangster identity so easily stereotyped in Hong Kong cinema.

In other works, the professional assistance of the choreographer here is replaced by that of the acting coach, evincing an interest in the external experience of identity influenced by both the subjective portrayal of the self within a second-language society and the failure of objectivity in the psychoanalytical reading. *Tuhng Ngoh Dei Wan* (2007), for example, involves three pregnant mainland women illegally smuggled into Hong Kong and trained by a professional acting coach to act and respond in a manner as they themselves believed Mainland Chinese to be perceived by local Hong Kong Chinese. Seated at a small table, the women harass visitors to join their mahjong game, ridiculing and otherwise tormenting their gambling partners. Unfortunately, due to legal restrictions, no video of this performance exists, leaving the photograph once again to stand in as both evidence and representation of the work. Fitting the sartorial stereotypes of mainland visitors to Hong Kong and clutching mahjong tiles, the women depicted in these images both exist within and perform from the outside the identities to which they are assumed to belong. The notion of exaggerated behavior appears again with a new series of *Affective Portraits* (2010) in which acting coaches coax the subjects of the photographs to perform certain emotions. By relating particularly painful memories and via other rhetorical techniques, the affective positions of the posing subjects thus occasionally appear authentic to a greater or lesser degree, again projecting from the outside an identity or behavior that does not necessarily exist anywhere within the circumscribed space of the subject in terms of its own self-knowledge. Installed in three-dimensional frames mimicking crystalline structures, these images are thus further disrupted in a way that underscores not the fragmentation of identity common to the postmodern mode but rather the always-already instability of the images on which this body of work so heavily relies.

Although his artistic career began with a series of de-

lightly minimalist and referential sculptures, in particular *Boidae C. Constrictor* (2005), which appears as a snake in three block-like sections, and *I Love You But I Can't Be With You* (2005), which constructs highly formalist relationships between goldfish in round tanks, Wong has since tended towards excess in many respects. Minimalism, of course, is no ally of the theater, and it is the mode of live storytelling that emerges most successfully in these ornate and excessive productions and performances of research-based historical material. Narrative, however, is consigned to the position of an element of the scene, all in an effort to refine and process the totality of the story at hand into a set of images that, though never intended to stand in as iconic representations in their own right, nevertheless function as a symbolic currency contributed to discourses of art and contemporary culture. Most significantly, the roles played by history and identity are considerably tempered by a self-conscious humor that pervades much of this work, from the joking ducks of *From the Annals of the Harmony Jade Roast Meat Society* to *Tunnel Vision* (2008), a dramatization of the artist's own colonoscopy, and *Fountain* (2006), a sculptural take on the ritualized practice of washing place settings in boiling dark tea before proceeding to eat at any meal. Ultimately, it is this comedic element—indubitably a strategy to cope with the play of multifold identities along the lines of the alienation produced by Cantonese transliteration—that positions Adrian Wong beyond the exclusive discourses of theater and neo-minimalism and in a cultural territory that sits at odds with both existing identity-based artistic practices in Hong Kong and formalist practices in the artist's other home of Los Angeles. The images he produces so copiously, sometimes in series, sometimes in moving form, and sometimes singly, persist in a process of often forceful contribution to the symbolic orders that refuse to allow these projects to enter as works of art per se; their status as imagery only entrenches the ideas they carry ever more deeply into the foundations of defensive cultural architectures that attempt to keep them out. 🍵