

[2020-12-04] The shaping of reminiscent objects: What remains after the Sunflower Movement?

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2020-12-04

Script for a presentation for the *East Asian Popular Culture Association 2020 Conference*, recorded at the National Taiwan Normal University

<https://hackmd.io/@trc/reminiscent_objects_presentation_script>

Slide 1: Title slide

The shaping of reminiscent objects: What remains after the Sunflower Movement?

This the title of my talk.

I am Tyng-Ruey Chuang from the Institute of Information Science, Academia Sinica.

At Academia Sinica, we have been working on the Sunflower Movement Archive since 2014.

The Archive collects artifacts left behind by the activists in the occupied chamber when they retreated from the Taiwan's legislature (立法院) in April 2014.

The Archive also includes documentary materials such as records of streaming videos as well as collections of photos.

We worked with Dr. Shih-Yuan Hsieh (謝仕淵) while he was at the National Museum of Taiwan History when we were setting up the Archive at Academia Sinica.

This presentation receives input from him as well as from colleagues in Academia Sinica.

I would like to thank Dr. Hung-Yi Chien (簡宏逸) for organizing this session and the invitation to participate. It is a pleasure to be with Brian Hioe (丘琦欣) at this panel. The *Daybreak* project he did, which is a comprehensive oral history of the Sunflower

Movement, is one of projects I admire most.

Slide 2: Occupied chamber I

The beginning of the Sunflower Movement probably can be marked on the night of March 18, 2014, when students and activists started to occupy the main chamber of Taiwan's Legislature.

As for the question of when did the Sunflower Movement end, or whether it has actually waned, there is no easy answer as aftershocks from the Movement still have effects on Taiwan politics.

Slide 3: Occupied chamber II

How would contemporary civil movements, of which the Sunflower Movement is but one of them, be remembered and interpreted when the society has seemingly moved on to normalcy?

What are the remaining objects that would help bear the memory of the movements?

What stories would these objects tell the future generations, and how?

Based on our observations from the Sunflower Movement, we wish to comment on the shaping of reminiscent objects of possibly cultural significance.

We also comment on the challenges faced by research and memory institutions on keeping up with all the cultural artifacts generated by contemporary movements.

Slide 4: Bowel Flower Trash Talk Forum

We begin by looking into the “Bowel Flower Trash Talk Forum” (大腸花論壇) which took place in the evening of April 8, 2014, outside the Legislature.

In a press conference the day before, the leading activists announced the occupation would come to an end on April 10.

For many protesters, this foretold vacation was an anti-climate.

Indie DaDee (音地大地), a well-known activist, had been live-streaming the occupation since its beginning.

He decided to host the Bowel Flower Trash Talk Forum so that people participating in

the protest, especially for those felt being marginalized, would have a public, direct, and liberal space to express and exchange frustration and displeasure.

“Bowel Flower” (大腸花) is a wordplay on “Sunflower” (太陽花).

The Forum would let anyone publicly mock the occupation, by extension the entire Movement itself, as well as all things related to the protest.

Foul language would be explicitly encouraged.

It worked out sensationally.

The Forum was participatory and vocal.

People called in as well as queued up on site to speak and curse.

The Forum was held nearby the site of occupation, was streamed online, and was getting a huge crowd.

A communal sense of togetherness looped across the online space and physical space in real-time.

Not everyone got a spot to speak, but all enjoyed the curse words and laughters.

Slide 5: TV News on Forums

Lin Fei-fan (林飛帆), a charismatic activist, even came out to sit with Indie DaDee (音地大地) and jokingly talked about his reluctance in taking up the thankless job of starting the occupation.

He complained about the people who had brought in sunflowers.

“[They] Ruined the aesthetic feeling of this entire Movement,” he said.

「破壞這整場場運動的美感」

It would not be a surprise, to me, if he was watching the forum live elsewhere before deciding to emerge in person to mend relations.

This first ever Bowel Flower Forum ran into the early hour of the next day.

At its peak, it attracted tens of thousands of viewers on YouTube.

The Forum continued in the evenings of April 9 and 10.

Chen Wei-ting (陳為廷), a key activist, also appeared to voice complaints.

He complained about why on earth Lin Fei-fan had more fans than he had on Facebook.

“I think that is because I lack a jacket [like the one worn by Lin],” he joked about it.

「我想可能是我沒有一件外套的關係」

Another forum was held on April 19.

Initially it took place on the roadside in front of the Presidential Building but later moved to another location.

Chicken Fillet Sister (雞排妹), a young entertainer and personality, in this episode was making an act to take off and auction her bra in support of the Sunflower Movement.

Slide 6: public.318.io collections on Forums

There are different video takes of the Bowel Flower Forums on YouTube.

They were independently recorded and uploaded.

It is telling that Indie DaDee’ s recordings of the Forums were promptly duplicated and “backed up” by fans, also on YouTube.

At the Sunflower Movement Archive at Academia Sinica, users can watch and download videos we acquired from Indie DaDee and others.

Set out to acquire Indie DaDee’ s live-streaming video collections, as well as other “born digital” materials, has been a priority of those who are involved in archiving the Sunflower Movement.

Videos shared on social media platforms like YouTube can be taken down anytime.

YouTube is instrumental in reaching out and disseminating what is happening.

To preserve what had happened from decaying or lost, however, research and memory institutions do face many challenges.

Slide 7: public.318.io photos on Forums

Foremost, time is short and not on anyone’ s side.

We all wish to wait for things to settle a little.

We wish there is time to reflect, and only then start to acquire memorial objects that are most signifying.

The liquidity and simultaneity of contemporary movements, however, does not allow such luxury.

At the same time, the institutions often lack the resources and skills to support researchers in their works.

Slide 8: Photos from Yellow Dinosaur

Reminiscent objects of the contemporary movements exist as Internet memes, live videos, collaborative documents, and other digital objects.

To collect, preserve, curate, and represent these intangible objects in a sensible context demands investment and persistence.

It involves both research work and policy formulation.

It requires new thinking and arrangement at the institutions.

Social media platforms also restrict, by means of Terms of Service (ToS) and other technical measures, what general public and memory institutions can do with the objects on their platforms.

Slide 9: Concluding thoughts

The Bowl Flower Forum is a novel act in collaboratively marking a unique moment of the Movement.

At the time of the first forum, a vacation date of the occupation had been announced.

A peaceful retreat were to be expected.

However, the movement was certainly not yet in closure.

Many were still emotional, but as a protest it was coming to an end.

At this juncture of non-events, the forums let people pour out departing feelings and reflective thoughts.

The topics would no longer be what people were protesting against, but would be on the protest itself.

What actually happened.

Who did what to whom.

The forums are self-reflective in the sense that the participants were aware during the forums that they were revealing their own doings and feelings.

The stories mutually fed on one another at this ending ritual.

Its significance drawn not from the fact that core activists, like Lin Fei-fan and Chen Wei-ting, also came out for trash talks.

Rather, it was because these phenomenal gatherings could be what the protesters would remember of the occupation in the future.

The people in the core wanted to be seen at these forums with the people at the peripheral.

They too wanted to be streamed live and documented together.

The Bowel Flower Forums, now exist as video recordings, could well be what people would revisit to remember the Movement, and to tell their grandchildren about.

Slide 10: Indie DaDee YouTube profile

The Bowel Flower Forums organized and hosted by Indie DaDee shaped many people's memory about an ending moment of the Sunflower Movement.

These forums seemed organic but they certainly didn't appear by chance.

Indie DaDee had been into video-casting long before the Sunflower Movement broke out.

Since the start of the occupation, he had been live-streaming events with a focus on the protesters.

He was filming at the “Lower Class Liberating Area” (賤民解放區) for example.

These faithful audiovisual recordings of the forums are reminiscent objects from the Movement.

Slide 11: Indie DaDee started on Dec 15, 2008

Indie DaDee has been working on video-casting on and for social issues and movements for more than 11 years.

Now I come to my concluding sentence of my presentation.

Activists (including Indie DaDee and all the participants in the Bowl Flower Trash Talk Forums), Internet platforms (such as YouTube), and research institutions (Academia Sinica, for example) are connected in this particular setting, if only loosely, in shaping a certain memory about the Sunflower Movement.