

「injector after Null」，展覽現場，2021
injector after Null, exhibition view, 2021

臺灣藝術家鄭先喻正以臺北科技藝術圈難以企及的步調創作引人入勝的作品。他於 2019 年獲得第二屆銅鐘藝術賞，並於 2020 年夏季於臺灣當代文化實驗場 (C-LAB) 舉辦該獎項的個展。接著，於 2020 年 12 月加入由 C-LAB 舉辦、鄭淑麗策展的《LAB KILL LAB》實驗計畫，參與〈米學院之米蟲革命〉的製作。目前鄭先喻正於臺北市立美術館舉辦個展「injector after Null」，展出期間 2021 年 3 月 17 日至 8 月 8 日。

鄭先喻的作品帶有獨樹一幟的清明之感，然而，對其作品陌生的人可能會感到困惑。有些觀眾無法領會藝術家意欲傳達的訊息，因而感到迷失。據藝術家所言，有些觀眾甚至感到生氣。藝術展覽需要參訪者細細檢視、思考自己眼前的作品，可是觀眾時常略瞥幾眼就想「看懂」。鄭先喻的作品卻要觀眾花時間與之相處，才能領會其意趣。這並不是說藝術家的作品像待解謎題，而是時間的流逝為其作品的必要成分；他的許多裝置都要觀眾在場（或經過之後）才能運作。除了時間因素，也有不確定性，需仰賴運氣。觀眾若不理解，自然會感到困惑，有時也因而感到焦慮。

觀眾進入北美館展間便會看見一個小金屬箱，置於不起眼的立架上。金屬箱看似邀請觀者將手機放入充電，若開始充電，金屬箱便會關閉。「手機從手中被取走，為什麼？接下來會發生何事？要怎麼拿回手機？金屬盒中的手機會發生何事呢？」觀者勢必自問。手機不再由觀者控制（還是反過來？），觀眾也得不到答案。隨著手機電力毫無目的地虛耗，時間逐漸流逝。難道這就是藝術家想要傳達的訊息嗎？

展間一牆裝了三台螢幕，螢幕中數個白色色塊漫無目的地緩緩移動、旋轉。牆面附近亦有白色的大型木塊裝置，然而兩者的移動並不同步。觀眾只能盡力檢視，卻看不出端倪。唯有正要離開現場時，觀眾才會聽到些許噪音。有些事在觀眾不知情的狀況下發生了。難道藝術家希望觀眾這麼想嗎？

觀者仍不確定，卻隱隱約約有了些頭緒。在四月的一個週六，鄭先喻陪我到北美館看他的展覽。他向場內工作人員打招呼（稱呼他們為「阿姨」；臺灣習慣以阿姨來稱呼跟母親同齡的女性），並表明自己是藝術家本人。他迅速地解決現場一些技術問題。有些作品被觀眾不小心弄歪了，或是因為他們試圖理解作品。我們還沒反應過來，工作人員已高興地向場內觀眾宣布藝術家本人在場，將為觀眾進行導覽。鄭先喻從善如流接下任務。

本次展覽其中幾件作品源自他的舊作。藝術家說明 2016 年作品《Sandbox》為了配合行動通訊業者的實務變革，已歷經數次演變。他用展間一個小型無線電裝置干擾觀眾手機與塔台間的通訊。由於收不到訊號，手機須以非加密頻道表明身分並進行通訊。藝術家的裝置便利用這個安全漏洞，將偽造簡訊傳至無法辨明訊息來源的手機。觀眾須在展場待滿一定時間這個機制才會啟動。藝術家的裝置設法欺騙觀眾手機的同時，觀眾正處於空無一物的展間，備感困惑。若他們有足夠耐心，遊走展間的時間夠長，便會在離開前收到一連串簡訊。

鄭先喻作品設計的共同主軸是不同空間類型之間的轉換。以《Sandbox》而言，實體空間（展間裡的手機）轉換至資訊空間（訊號的干擾與簡訊的傳送），又再回到實體空間（手機離開展間時存有簡訊）。這樣充滿玩興的轉換，從藝術家早期作品便能一探端倪。例如系列作品《Afterlife》（本次未於北美館展出），電蚊燈殺死的蚊子會出現於以銀河侵略為主題的射擊電玩遊戲中，化身為遊戲角色，抵禦人類攻擊。於此，死去的蚊蟲轉換至另一個空間，成為「數位鬼魂」，向人類復仇。這個作品也須仰賴觀眾在展場待得夠久，等到有無辜的蚊子（或許正是被觀眾的氣味吸引至展間）被電蚊燈殺死，才會運作。

這些空間的轉換，都須由與展場作品共享空間的觀眾親身體驗並闡述。鄭先喻作品構想亦能以抽象形式欣賞。以某種程度而言，鄭先喻是概念藝術家，旨在探討「轉換」（或轉換的缺乏）和觀眾對其反應。鄭先喻與其他概念藝術家最大差別是其出色的技術能力。科技藝術中的「科技」的作用，已超脫常見的插畫性質、用來描繪想像情境的目的。對鄭先喻而言，「科技」是相襯的技術執行能力，用來全然實現抽象的概念。

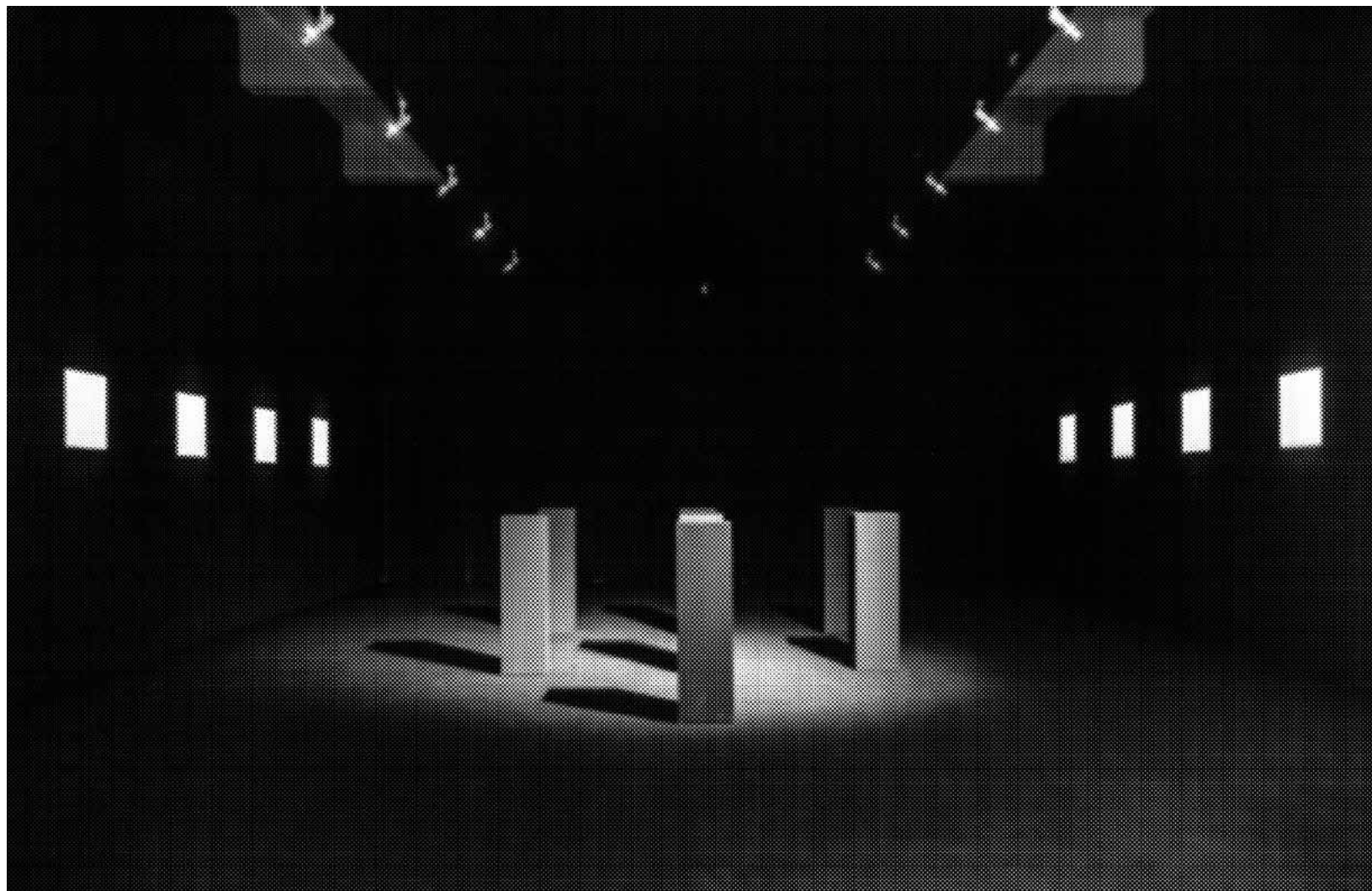
本次鄭先喻於北美館的特展名為「injector after Null」，或許亦須加以說明。電腦記憶體中的 null pointer（空指標）並未指向何處，但常作為分隔符碼，將有用資訊與未定義空間區隔開來。擅用空指標常會導致錯誤；我們也不難想像，在 null 周圍隨意注入（inject）的作法也令人質疑。

很可惜在本文撰寫當下，北美館因臺灣新冠肺炎防疫升至三級暫時關閉（而且可能會關閉一陣子）。不過，我可以推薦去年 11 月於臺中歌劇院拍攝，由蔡宏賢主持的（中文）訪談，其中藝術家深入討論其作品，這可在線上觀看。另推薦《證件照拍攝指南》，這是今年年初由 Very Mixer 狠

配計畫與鄭先喻、陳珊妮和談宗藩製作的（對白為中文，附英文字幕），影片探討身分與監控，發人深省且相當有趣。

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Hsien-Yu Cheng, a Taiwan-based artist, has been producing intriguing works at a pace hard for the Taipei tech arts circle to keep pace with. He received the second Tung Chung Art Award in 2019 and held a special exhibition in the summer of 2020 at C-LAB (Taiwan Contemporary Culture Lab) for the award. Later in December 2020, he was part of a group participating in *LAB KILL LAB*, a week-long laboratory directed by Shulea Cheang and organized by C-LAB, in the production of *RICE ACADEMY Rice Bug Revolt*. Right now he has a solo exhibition, titled *injector after Null*, at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) that runs from March 17 until August 8, 2021.

Cheng's works offer a signature clarity once you get into them. His installations nevertheless can be confusing for new visitors. Some viewers feel lost when they fail to catch what is meant to get across. According to Cheng, some even got angry. It goes without saying that when in an art exhibition visitors take time examining and thinking about the works before their own eyes. However, people often want to "get it" in just a few glimpses; Cheng wants you to get it only after spending time with his works. It is not that they are puzzles for you to figure out. Rather, the passing of time is an essential ingredient – many of his installations only function after some duration of time at (or after) your presence. With the passing of time, there is also a question of uncertainty and luck. When you seem not to get it at all, you wonder why. Some anxiety may start to kick in.

In the exhibition room at TFAM, a small metal box sits on top of an unassuming stand. It seemingly greets the visitors and asks them to charge their phones. Once your phone is being charged, the metal box seals itself. You are physically locked out of your

phone. Why is that and what is next? How long will this take, and what will it do to your phone? You ask yourself. The phone is no longer under your control (or is it the other way around?). You are not getting answers. The time drags out as your phone battery being drained for no purpose. Is this the message Cheng wants to send you?

On three flat panels mounted on a wall in the room, big white blocks are slowly moving and rotating for no particular reason. The movement seems asynchronous nor related to the large woody blocks nearby, also in white. You try to give your best examination but find nothing. Only after you leave the scene do you hear some noises. Something is happening behind your back. Is that what Cheng wishes to make you think?

You are not too sure but you are getting the ideas. On one April Saturday, Hsien-Yu Cheng accompanied me to his exhibition at TFAM. He greeted the staff in the room (as “aunties,” keeping the custom in Taiwan on referring to women about the age of one’s mother) and identified himself as the artist. He quickly fixed some glitches in the room. Some pieces had been unknowingly twisted by visitors, perhaps in an attempt to understand them. Before we knew it, the staff happily announced to the people in the room that they were in the presence of the artist and that he would give a guided tour. Cheng promptly took up the assignment.

Several items at the exhibition are new iterations of his old works. He explained how *Sandbox*, a work from 2016, has undergone some changes so as to keep up with the practices of telecom operators nowadays. Cheng uses a small radio station in the room to jam the signals being transmitted between the visitors’ phones and the network stations. The jamming forces the phones to identify themselves and to talk over less secure channels. Cheng’s radio station exploits this weakness and is programmed to send out spurious messages to the confused phones. This takes effect only after the phones have been in the room for some time. While their phones are being fooled, museum visitors walk in a minimally decorated room and wonder why. The wandering visitors, if they are patient, will start getting texted when they are about to leave.

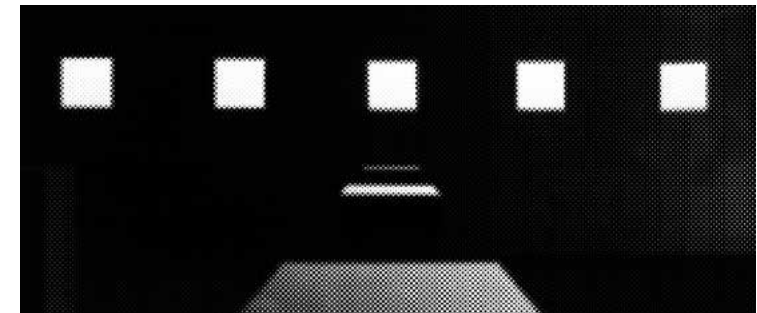
Cheng’s designs share the characteristics of making transitions in between different types of space. For *Sandbox*, it is from the physical space (phones in the room) to the information space (signals jammed and texts sent) and to the physical space again (phones leaving the room with messages left on them). Such playful transitions have been evident since his early works. For example, in *Afterlife* (not shown at TFAM), mosquitoes electrocuted by a lamp trap are transformed into shooters in a galaxy invader type video game where they defend themselves from the humans. That is, dead insects transit into digital ghosts in another space where they now seek revenge. This occurs only when the visitors

stay long enough to witness innocent mosquitoes being trapped by the lamp (attracted to the room, perhaps, by the smell of their presence).

These transitions between spaces are meant to be experienced and articulated by people on site with the works. The ideas in Cheng’s works, however, can be equally appreciated in their abstract forms. In a sense, Hsien-Yu Cheng can be viewed as a concept artist exploring transitions (or the absence of them) and people’s reactions to them. What differentiates him from others is his excellent technical skills. Tech, as in tech arts, departs from its usual illustrative purposes for imaginative scenarios. Tech, for Hsien-Yu Cheng, is all in the realization of abstract concepts in matching implementations.

The title of Cheng’s current exhibition at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, *injector after Null*, perhaps needs some explanation. A null pointer in computer memory points to nowhere. It often doubles as a delimiter separating the useful data from the undefined space. Playing with null pointers is error-prone, and we can imagine injecting something around null can be questionable.

At the time of this writing, unfortunately, the Museum is in lockdown (and probably will be for some time) as Taiwan is fighting against a sudden surge of COVID-19 cases. Going online, however, I can recommend a video interview from last November at the National Taichung Theater, hosted by Escher Tsai, in which the artist talked extensively about his works (in Mandarin). You may also enjoy *Photo of ID*, a thoughtful and amusing video on identity and surveillance, produced earlier this year by Very Mixer with Hsien-Yu Cheng, Sandee Chan, and Tsung-Fan Tan (in Mandarin with English subtitle).



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