

Su Hui-Yu

Re-Shooting, those who were forbidden / wronged / failed from the past

CINEMA TICK TACK

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Su Hui-Yu
The White Waters 2019/2020
Single Channel re-edit
15' 21"

Text by Orlando Maaïke Gouwenberg

Su Yu-Hui takes us on a slick sensual visual ride into specific cultural histories of his country. By "re-shooting" historical moments that are anchor points in the cultural history of Taiwan, Su Hui-Yu shares elements that could not be taken down by Martial Law or other oppressive forces that tried to silence radical political voices. As a second nature and with outstanding craft, he creates space for what was forbidden or wronged and brings specific stories back into the present, saving them from being forgotten. These carefully created, contemporary, highly designed and composed situations are filmed in a way that freezes a moment in time and allows the viewer to become a voyeur looking around in situations of major historical weight. Those captured/frozen moments are so perfectly aesthetically pleasing that one gets fully taken away and seduced to linger and give into your curiosity to observe all the details. The haze and smoke not only creates a dreamlike image, it also deliberately blurs what we see. The works are performances on film, with characters precisely casted for the situation, dressed in highly fashionable costumes, surrounded by a dense haze, and well chosen colors. And in that hypnotic magical state, the thick history fluidly drips in drop by drop, and slowly fills our bodies and minds with a more political, sometimes darker, knowledge or story. By using the technique to pull the audience in and catch its gaze, through mysterious, psychedelic or erotic images, Su sees it as an invitation to revisit collective and personal memories of the country and East Asia. Taiwan is a land with a colonial history and collective tradition, patriarchal ideology and a martial law past.

Re-shooting is a term derived from the film industry. It allows directors to fix, retell or interpret what they originally shot, like a method for filmmakers to reflect, to take action and make changes to their first choices. Re-shooting is also a way to totally re-do a film, seen from contemporary life, to be able to communicate the layers of meaning to a present day audience. And this is

where Su connects with his personal method to borrow the term re-shooting, and through that, metaphorically fix, re-tell, or re-imagine some parts, sections, and moments of different kinds of histories or from the collective memory.

In his work in general, subjects and themes are emphasized that deal with (forbidden) sexuality, queer/gender fluidity, the position of women and feminism. He has a strong link to the history of theater and, through his work, he honors several artists he admires or sees as forgotten. The political history of the country is always present because there is no way around it when one wants to re-shoot the radical antagonistic voices of the past. And even though his subjects are often serious, he creates lightness in the image and scenes. The fact that the audience can voyeuristically dwell in a beautifully crafted moment, allows for attention to detail and therefore also attention to the lightness and (absurd) humor that is hidden in the scenes.

The four films that were on show in Antwerp, - *The White Waters; The Walker; L'être et le Néant* (1962, Chang Chao-Tang); and *Future Shock*, - are part of the re-shooting series that Su Hui-Yu started some years ago. *L'être et le Néant* (1962, Chang Chao-Tang), could be seen as a live photograph and has been shown only as an installation, while the three other works are shown in different ways. The *White Waters* was made as the first live performance of the artist, and afterwards shown as an installation. The others are shown as multiple screen installations and as single screen cinema presentations. It is the artist's shapeshifting mentality in his work that makes the idea of the re-shoot even more interesting. Not only does he visit the past but he also allows himself, as well as the audience, to take a step back and look at what he wants to dive into. The work never becomes static because every presentation moment allows for a new form. Questions like the amount of screens, which films to compile, what type of equipment to show them on, to add a live element or not, all come into play and make sense to explore when one wants to understand a situation as fluid as history.

Re-Shooting, those who were forbidden / wronged / failed from the past, which was on show at TICK TACK in Antwerp, seduced the viewer for several weeks to let themselves enter a hypnotic dream state where they could freeze in the moment and forget where they are going, or when they saw a glimpse of the high tech video works, they came back to re-watch the films that were shown on loop. Looping fits perfectly to the re-shoot. It allows the viewer to get to know the work in different moments, to give it thought, to look at it differently, to place it within their own lives. And that is one way of how the process of going back and forth between past and present, between historical significant moments and the history in the making of today, can become part of a body and therefore a bodily memory.

PS.

As a footnote. Orlando Maaïke Gouwenberg has been a huge supporter of Su Hui-Yu's work since she got to know it through her work for International Film Festival Rotterdam, where several of the works were shown. She was the lucky person who created the performance *The White Waters* with him for Performa 19, and they are currently working on a longer term engagement to create a new work at Jester in the near future.

For anyone who's interested in Su Hui-Yu's work, come to Maastricht for Transitions (9-14 March). The work *Super Taboo* will be on show during Transitions in Maastricht, as well as a cinema screening of the work *The Glamorous Boys of Tang*, both presented by Jester, where Orlando Maaïke Gouwenberg is artistic director.