

The Human Nature

During an Art Festival in 2003, a friend asked me, "Have you not noticed there are people wanting to erase your marks?" So, I tried looking for the installation piece, "I Erase Your Trace". However, it was the installation that actually caused me to stumble upon it in an unanticipated pathway. In actual fact, it was my foot that triggered off the movement of the visual images; images of sneaking men, closely following you, frantically trying to wipe off the marks that you left behind only moments ago. Similar to other audience, I speeded up my random steps and let the men appeared under my feet in different places. With further movements and observations, a feeling of unease overtook my entire body. The people under my feet were so naked; they tried to wipe off my marks with such intense action as though they were scared that they would be unable to erase the "marks" that I did not actually leave behind. Later, I realized this interactive game depicts the violence and vengeance between one individual and another individual or a group.

To say Du Zhenjun's artworks could initiate interactivity with the audience, they also cause the audience to completely indulge themselves as part of the art. The great "Global Fire" installation at the top of the dome is one such piece that totally captivates the audience. Inside the ball, we can see giant flames graphics being escalated; and the flicking a cigarette lighter off by the audience will then set forth the graphics. It has, with it, a stunning effect. The distinctive flags seem to be fluttering proudly along the wind at one moment and to be burning and treaded upon the next. This installation piece is best presented with a collective crowd because only a collective can light a fire so great it can burn all the flags of the world. The obliteration of the colors representing a nation can be upsetting for some, but here, it is merely the result of the collective and it accurately brings back the long forgotten cynical and resentful sentiments. The thick smoke seems to suggest the craziness of suicidal and massacre. As the next group of audience approaches, the thick smoke slowly dissipates.

"The Tower of Babel" is an installation that exhibits the insolence of mankind. A thermometer is placed at the bottom of this structure, much like the infrared temperature detectors we see at the airports. The public can have their temperature taken at the exhibit. The language used here is the current global language: Cyber-language. One followed by another, the audience comes to enjoy the experience of being part of the collective. Together, they light "the Tower of Babel" with their body temperatures. The

most personal experience becomes insignificant. As the tower becomes completely lit, a pillar of fire soars towards the sky, as though to anger God. Does this collective use of language - the cyber-language - a sign that human beings can once again build the Tower of Babel?

The opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games was held on 8th of August 2008 at 8:08PM exactly, connecting dreams of wealth, position and national strength through the number 8. Du Zhenjun finds his inspiration in this. In his collaboration with his models, Du instructed them to walk in the most awkward position and never allowing them to stand up straight during the photo shoot. All this to produce the images caught on security cameras. Collectively, they form an awesome image – with no beginning and no ending – to compose the prosperous Number 8. In this piece, there is the possibility of interaction between the art piece and its audience. Without an ending, nothing seems to be able to stop a self-circulating capitalistic system.

Du Zhenjun's "SharkMan" is not the first of his experiment of this kind. The artist used image processing to combine man and animal. As early as 1997, he had created a similar piece called "ChienMan". It was an unidentifiable dog, nor could we know if the dog had human characteristics. It would seem that the avant-garde artist had chosen a sexier creature, a man with shark characteristics. There are some things that are left for the audience to decide, as one touches the half immersed naked body on the screen, the creature would start bleeding. The non-violent action that concealed with it resulted in bloody violence. Where does this cruelty come from, the artist or the audience?

In "Human Cage", Du Zhenjun is 'decapitated', with one severed hand being set in one location and another hand somewhere else. The artist wants to remind us that whenever we imprison other people, we imprison ourselves. Anaesthetized by our own confidence, we are disappearing from this earth. Disappearance is the focus of this discussion as the severed body parts are being put together. Is the artist trying to sew the body back together with threads of humanity? If this is indeed his topical issue, everything remains uncertain. In each of his exhibits within the exhibition, we pick up bits of information, here and there.

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