

在不在家，还是身首异处

/阿毛

我在此写下的，是一些由沈莘的作品所想到的笔记。我希望它们以一种非线性的方式相互关联，尽管大概出于对秩序的无法摆脱，仍然为它们标了号。本文会描述以重现展览环境及作品呈现，但会限制对作品本身的描述（如需了解可参阅剩余空间微信公众号发表的沈莘写的作品介绍并参阅艺术家个人网站shenxin.info）及针对性的评述。本文也会稍加刻意地不使用过多的既有概念词汇，比如美学。这篇文字，同时也是我的语音，它是我向你叙说的一种媒介，这种语音感类似沈莘在她的影片中自己念的旁白或歌唱。它本可以像所有文字生长时那样，在长久持续的思考的兴奋中一直写下去，但显然它又同万事一样需要停止，不过停止并不意味着终结，只要感知与思考持续，一如时间。

01 艺术家

沈莘不想自己被当做一名艺术家，更准确地说，她不喜欢特别强调艺术家这个身份，或人们会因而带着各自对这一身份的种种预设与联想来看待她；她更希望做一名研究者。她倒也不那么在乎会“被当做什么”；这让我想到，著名的中国当代艺术藏家乌力·希克（Ugli Sigg）也曾公开表示，他最希望自己被视为一名研究者，而非外交官、慈善家、法学家、记者、商人或最为人们所知的藏家。在一篇关于沈莘的文章的开头提到一位当代艺术界的著名人士，让我想起，在我和她的对谈开头，她提到了艾未未，并说她并不关心艾未未做了什么，她也觉得艾未未做了什么与她无关。而我们对身份的敏感，以及身份与个体实际从事的工作与活动之间的关系，其实关乎着一种对自我的重要性的认定的需要。不过在沈莘看来，这更多同她的工作方式与她所理解的艺术何为相关。比如，关于艺术家创作（尤其在视觉上）被认为是表达与再现这一点：

我可能不太同意所谓主流美学或其它的实践方式中的一点，是作品和艺术家之间的关系被视为理所当然的“代表”的关系——艺术家认为自己作为一个艺术家，做一件作品就是要表达这一点。这种做法本身应该被质疑，这是应该被摒弃的一种关系。...我的创作是一个想法的过程的体现，并非表现一个既定的东西，因为我对代表的机制本来就是完全反对的。另外，我做出来的作品本身就是有机的，它的思想方式编织出来的是一个有机的东西。当观众在观看时，它是一个被曝光的状态，但它一定与“服从”无关。...一个写得好的作家并不是完全想要传达他的意思给你，让你只有接收这样一种方式。而是你可以投入他的一个思考过程，然后运用他所想的东西来思考你自己的东西。让艺术作品成为一个工具，这是我提倡的一个做法。¹

如果在读完这段她的陈述后再来看为什么她希望被视为一名研究员，以及她所指的研究是什么，可能会更好理解。一般科学研究都会从一个或一系列相互关联的问题出发，并设定研究对象与范围，运用一种或同时运用多种研究方法及其逻辑导向来得出研究结果；如果沈莘说她是一名研究员，那么她的研究方法是什么？按照她的话说，是“自己觉得有关联的东西，有点像研究一个网络，它是怎么制作的，怎么形成的，然后把这网络中的一些点拉出来，看

它们与其他网络之间的构造。但肯定这个方法是带有一定的主观性和选择性的，不过这些文本或选择的对象已经是存在的，所以这是一种比较复杂、比较繁复、压力比较大的方式。就是自己得看很多（书，电影等），然后把没有关联的东西联系起来，是这样的一个东西。”而其研究成果就是作品。沈莘的作品大多以影像方式呈现，但它们也同时包含了其诞生的过程，并往往借助一些新的技术手段，以及他人的协作；此外，视觉往往只是这些影像的一个维度，我们也经常可以通过声音、文字、动画及现场交互来体会作品。

不过正像许多身份并非孤立存在、而是由其所处的系统和环境所赋予并共生一样，如今，艺术家之为艺术家，也恰由于，比如可以在一个非营利的艺术空间或机构做展览，或被委托创作新作品，或参加全球各地的驻地，或申请各种文化艺术基金、文化艺术机构乃至商业品牌的资助、甚至艺术家签证。于是艺术家作为一种身份，不仅存于舆论，或艺术市场的经济流通体系，更能成为资金来源的渠道，或某种生存条件的备注。张鼎在上海外滩美术馆做的《风卷残云》项目把一大群中国当代艺术界的活跃人物“关”进了金色牢笼并全程直播这群 将自己视为研究员，但在多数与她发生关系的机构、专业人士与观众看来，她仍具备艺术家的身份。而这种使艺术家之为艺术家的系统，虽说复杂，但若与使我们之为我们的系统相比，其复杂程度想必远弱于后者。所谓身份的问题，连问题本身都有其形成的历史；沈莘认为身份无法被孤立讨论，其实应被讨论的是复杂性：“我的作品其实就是对复杂性的看法。所谓复杂性不是说一个身份由很多东西组成，而是说组成的过程中有很多脆弱的东西，很多不能被代表、不能被言说的东西，这些东西怎么能够在我所做出的影像，或者是在别人观看——从A到B看这个影片时——能保留下来。我认为这就是在建造一个系统，去让脆弱的和复杂的东西不断地循环、不断地改善、不断地构造，这样的一个过程。”

沈莘是成都人，她的父亲是一名画家（在这次展览进门左手边，前言旁边的墙上就挂着他父亲画的一幅画）。在她的作品《细数祝福（2014）》中，父女二人同赴西藏，接续父亲多年绘画少数民族肖像的“传统”。留着朋克风格短发的艺术家在高原上担任父亲的助理和摄影师，这些拍摄素材，同一些稍带家庭录像带风格的、在她成都家中录制的与父亲的对话、她的作画练习等视频片段，一起被剪辑在这部影片中。创造图像，于她并不陌生，反倒因为熟悉而更易建立起对图像及其所表征的所谓现实之间关系的审视，并意识到相应的局限。而作为画家的父亲，以其创作收入所得满足家庭的生活开销，并支持沈莘留学海外，也成为了她通过这次“联合创作”进行观察与重新建立某种联系的对象。有不少艺术家曾邀请自己的亲人参与到创作中，共事关系与亲属关系相融合；在这里，连创作这件事也两相融合了。

02 相识

初识沈莘，是在一次评选活动中，她作为申请人之一，而我坐在评委之间。由于项目要求，她需要用英文陈述，我惊喜于她的侃侃而谈，并着迷于她叙述时显见的奔逸思考的状态和高度自控的理性；她不太表露感情，但似乎这种不太表露亦是自然的。此后我们保持着联系，并曾试图就一个潜在项目展开合作，不过后来因时间关系而不了了之。写作此文时，我读到了下面沈莘说的这段话，于是觉得有趣：

我逐渐养成一个颇为尴尬的习惯。当我遇见一个人，或者当我被介绍给某个人时，我便会构想一种可能的合作，有时就是凭空而来的。就像我说的，这要看我如何将我的实践与人、图像、事件等发生关联。²

这体现出一种好奇心、善意与开放度，并透露出一种幽默感（或许很少有人用幽默来形容沈莘其人或作品，不过在《巨人的肩膀（2015）》中，四位在欧洲语境下工作的学者：伊斯特·莱斯利 (Esther Leslie)、汉娜·布莱克 (Hannah Black)、马克·费舍尔 (Mark Fisher) 和西蒙·奥沙利文 (Simon O'Sullivan) 演讲时的神态被捕捉并转化为无辜、生硬的卡通形象（这些形象来自《山海经》）这一做法显得滑稽，而且我们很容易观察到一个让人觉得好笑的、我们并不陌生的现象：一人在发言时，其他三人往往流露出不耐烦的神情或索性闭目养神；当然他们的表情因动态捕捉与动画生成的技术限制而不可避免地变形失真）。同时，这也解释了沈莘的诸多项目都会和不同领域的人士合作这一点，这些友人为她的影片配乐，或翻译影片用到的文本，或制作动画，或担当嘉宾与模特等等。这些合作也往往是参与式的，合作者不只是执行分配到的任务，而是参与到作品的构思过程，并延展性地激发各自贡献的技艺在意义上能够如何同作品相交织。这种交织，包裹着一种主动性，或许也恰恰呼应了沈莘的这一“尴尬的习惯”。

沈莘长年旅居国外，先后在新加坡和英国读书并生活，还因多次驻地与项目去过北欧与韩国等地区和国家。旅居经历和状态支持她较容易地接触到一些国际上较新的出版物，并有较多机会同各地各领域人士交流与合作。

03 特定时空中的家

沈莘在武汉剩余空间的个展“在家”试图审视“在家”这一状态，她号称要把“家”视作前线 (frontier)，提问何以为“家”，甚至提问“家”是否必要，并通过五件展出的影像检视人对“家”的欲求与抵抗，并由此强调刚才我们已经说到的人对身份的需要及对身份的审视的复杂性。

展厅的光线昏暗，你并非在步入一个会令你觉得亲切温馨的类似于家的布置的现场，又或者说家就是亲切温馨的呢？空间右侧是一个四角形的可步入空间，中间一张桌子，四条长凳分别面向四个屏幕，屏幕上播放着正在说话的古怪的卡通形象：四个眼睛的娃娃脸，青蛙，独眼的怪物，四个耳朵的猴子。它们的语音需要带上耳机才能听到，但现场同时也流动着来自其他几个屏幕的声音，它们隐约地、不至于相互干扰地交叠。一面半透明立墙挡在这可步入空间与一面一人高的投影幕之间，投影幕前面的地上随意散着一些坐垫。走到这面投影幕的后方，仍能看到投影的背面——左右相反的正在活动的画面。对称放在左右墙角两个半人高基座上的箱式电视机前分别摆了一把椅子，是独自一人观看的邀请。在左侧的另一个略小的房间，几乎占满整面墙的投影在房间内侧，而贴着靠近入口的对面的墙下摆了长凳，于是在观者和影片之间是整个房间的长度。这是我对“在家”展览现场的印象，观者被安排了位置，作品也都拥有各自相对完整独立的空间；并未感到特别明显的缺席，“在”场的物与人之间的

距离与空间也被周到地考虑并安排了。在穿行、伫立、坐下、观看并聆听的过程中，我携带着对“家”这一概念的询问。

近日，因棱镜门而出名的前美国中央情报局（CIA）特工爱德华·斯诺登（Edward Snowden）接受了英国《卫报》（正是这家媒体在2013年率先披露了斯诺登向其泄露的CIA对美国民众全面监听的信息）前主编的采访，并谈到了他对“家的感觉”（sense of home）及对其祖国美国的爱国情感：

他的作息“基本”遵循美国东部标准时间，醒时也多半都在上网，“不过我一直这么过的”。他承认自己想念美国代表的“家的感觉”，“但科技基本上克服了这种分离。就我而言，我本来就有点像外派的工作人员，记得不，我曾签约为中央情报局和国家安全局去海外工作。所以，这与我曾经为美国驻外工作相比真的没有太大不同。”³

...

“我无法改善俄罗斯的人权状况，而且说实在的，我首要关心的是先改善我自己的国家，因为它才是我怀有最大忠诚的国度。尽管很可能改变不了什么，但也许会起作用呢。”⁴

在被通缉后，他从夏威夷来到俄罗斯，显然，即便他想回到“自己的国家”，但仍须面临诸多阻碍；而在欧洲，维基解密（wikileaks）的创始人朱利安·阿桑奇（Julian Assange）则仍困居于厄瓜多尔大使馆。我并不想谈论政治，其实我对政治知之甚少；然而我也意识到政治一如艺术家一样，不应只是一个被过分赋予预设的概念；广泛的媒体传播与社交网络为人们对政治的关心提供了前所未有的便利，而两人也显然在这些传播渠道上获得了大量关注。这两名泄密者的处境，在我思考“家”这一概念时，来到了我的脑海。如果对比我和他们的处境，每天长时上网（虽然技术层级有天壤之别）这一点是一致的，想必吃饭、运动锻炼、睡觉之类的生活内容他们也不会略过（阿桑奇有点发福，斯诺登看上去和三年前相比几乎没有变化）；然而，如果我会勉强把每天要回的住处视为“家”（当然不仅因为它是一个居住空间，更因为我与丈夫共同生活于此），那么他们显然不会把他们目前的住处视为家。在日常语境里，住处作为一个可以归来的地方，常被称作“家”，但显然沈莘想要讨论的“家”在意义上更为宽泛而复杂。这两名泄密者，或许正是那种可以让我们反思沈莘所提出的种种与“家”相关的问题的公众人物；如果家意味着归属感，那么归属的那个范畴是什么？一个国家？一个群体？一个家族？曾经共事并情同手足的朋友？一段婚姻关系与恋爱感情？那么我们对归属感的欲求与渴望，若拆解成安全感、对孤独感的抵抗、甚至是爱或更为抽象的幸福感，那么这份归属感在你不得自由时（不论是人身的还是意识的，不论对自由的禁锢是外在附加的还是有意或无意识的自我的）又意味着什么？

这两名泄密者之所以身处当下的处境，是因为他们的泄密行为被当权机构认定为是非法且有害的。斯诺登泄露的是美国人被CIA监视这一事实，他选择通过媒体将这一事实公之于众，已有两部关于他的影片（纪录片与剧情片）；阿桑奇则以维基解密这一线上平台招募告密者上传秘密，今年是维基解密20周年，近日上线的秘密包括本届美国大选总统候选人希拉里·克林顿的一些邮件记录。这些秘密信息，在被置于公众眼前时，它们对我们生存状态的影响也就更显著地可以被公开讨论。而这一从隐秘到公开的过程，在进入沈莘的这些影片时，也

在发生，只是这一过程不仅是从可见到不可见那么直接，它拥有着多重层次。在影片把各种影像素材剪辑在一起时，来自多个时空的发生被放入了同一条时间线，每次观者进入（我倾向于使用进入一词而非观看）影片时也就进入了影片所构建的特定时空，在这里，面对身首异处的或熟悉或陌生的画面、内容、事件，观者得以跟随但同时离散地去思考它们。即便对于既已公之于众的新闻事件——例如中国企业家斥巨资重建伦敦水晶宫（《礼记施用》，2014）——在被沈莘同其他文本与影像重新剪辑在一起后，似乎原本公开的状态显得隐秘了，而被打碎、拆解、与论语和艺术家的自述重组后，反倒变得莫名地明朗化了。

04 写作，语言

写作是一个不断叠加与削减的过程。如果将沈莘的创作与写作相较，它必然不是奇观式的，它所展现的，不是一头羊驼把它的头伸出纽约出租车的窗外这样的画面。它大概也是反故事性的，即便故事性或叙事无可避免地天然存在于语言和影像这样的媒介中。作为一名观者，我认为她也无意去区分虚构同非虚构，被打碎、拆解和重组的画面、语言、声音以非线性的叙事模糊着虚构与非虚构的界面。可以说，这些文字般的影片提供了一种另类的（比如同新闻相较）了解这个世界上正在发生什么的方式。

写作以及对语言的使用和构建渗透在沈莘的创作方式与过程中：

当我们去形成一种所谓的语言的时候，也是怎样去进行一个艺术创作的过程。而我把所谓美学和艺术家的位置放在一个“去思考”的位置，很多东西都可以变成思考的主体，所以每一次创作我都会去了解这个技术的含量，它为什么是这样、它和我所做的东西有什么样的连接。每一次都是新的思考方式。我希望能够以这样的方式不去形成一个固定的语言系统，而是一个流动的语言系统。⁵

不过关于虚构，艺术家未必会认同我的上述说法，因为在我和她的对谈中，她说：

我：你曾说制作影片的过程对你而言和写作类似，逐层铺陈。在我理解，写作从功能上来说，可能会分为评述性的，分析性的，说明性的，等等。你前面提到拍一部片子就像是在写一部虚构小说，那么为什么想要去强调这种虚构性（如果小说的定义包含虚构性），而非其他类型的文字？

她：因为它是在创造另外一种空间，有一个很明确的功能，虽然它不是一个乌托邦的空间，没有理想的一些理念，而它是一个跟乌托邦完全没有关系（的存在），但是它是有空间的，空间里面有很多繁复的、复杂的东西，它被放在这个方向或者说层次上。在那样一种情况下，你必须去观看它，你越不过它，（是）这样的一种比较暴力的空间。

05 时间，暴力

我们如何体会时间以及它的流逝？时间感是多么难以衡量，而且往往与和谁共处或独处相关。我们会在等待时感到焦躁，觉得时间过得缓慢；我们也会和心爱之人共处时瞬觉时光飞逝。时间感的多变，一如相对论告诉我们时间本身可以改变（可压缩或膨胀，非线性）一样。

进入一个展览现场，进入一件作品，和接受一项一对一的服务（比如按摩，理发，美容）之间，是否存在类比的可能性？接受服务时，另一个人（通常是陌生人）与你共处一段时间，甚至在上门服务时来到你家里；进入作品与展览时，你花时间进入艺术家（另一个人，这一点似乎好笑地需要强调一下）构建的一片时空，与一些试图激发你思考的可感知的存在共处。前者会达成一个特定效果（肩颈放松了，或新发型，或肤色增亮了），后者呢？时间在此花费了，但并非像花钱那样被花费，它的效果是希望不被预期的。又或者，即便艺术家设定了预期，她也完全不会去控制效果一定要达到预期。在这点上，作品对你花时间的邀请是非消费式的，它不意在迎合你的某种需求，它作为一片可进入的时空存在着而已。

沈莘认为，要求观者坐着把影片从A看到B是一种暴力：

她：首先我最主要的（创作）媒介是影像，它要让观众从A到B，这是一种很暴力的行为，要让大家坐着把影片看完，当然很多人不会看完。所以我会有在影院里呈现我的影片的兴趣，因为那样时间可以被控制。不只是观看，要看完，更是处于这段被建构出的时空中。

我：在影院？

她：对，就是放映的方式，而不是展览的方式。（看展览，你可以在作品的任一时间点进入或离开）

我：所以这是你比较偏好的作品呈现的方式？

她：对。

我：就是强制人必须进入空间。

她：对，然后花时间，花精力，在里面看完。看完以后，这样一个过程是我首先选择的一个方式，这中间可以形成很多的东西，包括我看的一些电视，我自己也会想很多各种各样的东西，不会只是说拿电视看来休闲。因为它会堆积时间，时间就会产生很多让你思考的空间。如果说其他的方式，可能我现在比较关注的是被同化的一种暴力，这样的一个主题吧，但是这个主题在很多东西上它都存在，包括宗教移民以后在文化当中被同化的一种暴力，兴趣上被同化的一种运动。

“暴力”是沈莘反复提及的高频词汇，而与之相应的另一个高频词汇“物化”则可以理解为是暴力所采取的常见手段。她对语言中暗含的暴力特别敏感（《付出式批评（2015）》中对《金阁寺》词句的引用，这部日本作家三岛由纪夫的战后小说以第一人称记述了一名青年人对美、毁灭、永生与死亡的态度转变），她的影片中对动物之间野性的暴力甚或战争或男权的暴力的表现（《雪国（2013）》中收录了中国妇女口述南京大屠杀期间日军对其性侵犯的录音，而作品标题亦是对日本作家川端康成在其同名小说中对男权及女性身份的思考的折射），从而她也特别关注掌控话语权的特定群体及被其隔离或撇除的其他群体（比如在讨论女性主

义时被和未被纳入的不同地域和文化下的女性群体），这也可以与前文有关“身份”的讨论相连接。在与她的私下交流中（本文中我与她的对谈是面向公众的），她写道：

也就是说，对于身份必须要有新的语言系统来讨论，包括倡导后网络女权的一批白人女艺术家，她们的作品概括性地描述网络对于女性身体的反射性，以为物化是一种可以去颠覆的行为，而忽略了很多群体的身体在网络之外，科技之外，还在被物化着。其实我对比较文学很感兴趣，对之前在哲学和理论领域研究的白人欧洲语境会有十分警觉的反省意识。“在家”即指一个开始去需要和抵抗的状态。

我曾在备忘录上写下过这样一句话：对情绪的抵制恰是对它的迷恋。而对“在家”的抵抗或许也同是出于对它的迷恋？

06 技术

我们还会意识到，沈莘在其创作中使用技术，并非将其视作单纯的工具，也会将技术本身诞生、演化与发展的潜涵意义纳入作品的语境中。她觉得在使用任何一种技术时必须思考技术本身所存在的意义：

为何会有编织成像虚拟声音库这样的东西？你去运用它时就必须了解它是如何发生的。当你在程序中输入一个字如critic（批评）时，这个单词就变成khrItIk之类的东西，那么我为什么要用类似于象声字的程序来做电影？它与我的电影之间的所谓美学和语言形成一种关系，这种关系是我必须去考虑的东西。我需要考虑这个程序是怎么形成的，而不能假设我有一个概念，用这个东西做出来的声音比较符合。拿3D motion capture（动态捕捉）来说，它的形成过程需要哪一些数据，我需要去训练它，训练那个卡通形象，使它认识我的脸，它才能依照我的脸做动作。而训练的这个过程本身就是有意义的，是你服从于它的过程。这些都是我必须考虑的东西，它们不只是一个形式或一种空壳。⁶

07 现实的表面及其下流动的血脉

我：你的作品，有点像是把一部影片的那些其实本来在幕后的制作过程拿出来，并作为你研究及思考的对象。

她：对。我觉得我的电影和真正的电影院可以放的电影之间最大的区别就是我会把整个生态系统都呈现出来，不是都呈现出来，可能就是在做的过程当中，它都有一个联系在里面，这个网络系统是没办法分开的一个东西。

我：就像我们这次看到的五件作品，都呈现出一种混剪的面貌，来自不同方向的素材混剪并共同呈现在一部影片当中，这种做法本身让人意识到其背后的运作方式，如你所说，整个生态系统。

写在最后

写作此文的我忐忑了许久才落笔，因为沈莘本人的大量写作（包括用在她影像作品中的文字和她写的自述与作品介绍以及一些论述性的文字）都是概念与术语密度相当高的重文字；而我选择把所有相关资料放在一旁备用，试着不带任何包袱、一身轻松地开始下笔，并根据需要边写边加入其它佐料（如你所见，摘录了一些她的话）。希望花不少时间读到此处的你，也借这篇文字获得了又一片思考的时空，并想去进入沈莘的作品。

*阿毛显然是一个化名，是一名活跃的艺术作者、编辑、翻译和策划人。

You Are Not Home, or Beheaded

/ A Mao

What I write here are notes on some of Shen Xin's works. I hope they are interrelated in a non-linear way, though I still number them probably due to my failure to get rid of order. This article will describe to reproduce exhibition environment and present works, but the description and specific recitation of the works (if you want to know, please refer to the works introduction written by Shen Xin and published by the WeChat official account of Surplus Space and see also the artist's personal website shenxin.info) will be limited. This article will also deliberately do not use too much of the existing conceptual vocabulary, for example, aesthetics. This text, also my voice, it is a medium I narrate to you, and this sense of voice is similar Shen Xin's voiceover or singing in her video. It could have been written in the excitement of long-lasting thought, just like how words are written, but apparently it needs to be stopped as well. Stopping doesn't mean the end, as long as perception and thought continue, it continues like time.

01 Artist

Shen Xin doesn't want to be treated as an artist, more precisely, she doesn't like to emphasize the identity of artist, or people look at her with various presets and associations of this identity; she prefers to be a researcher. She does not care much about how people will treat her. It reminds me that the famous Chinese contemporary art collector Ugli Sigg also once publicly stated that he most wished to be seen as a researcher, rather than a diplomat, philanthropist, jurist, journalist, businessman or the most well known collector. At the beginning of an article about Shen Xin, I mentioned a famous contemporary figure in the contemporary art world, who reminded me that at the beginning of my conversation with her, she mentioned Ai Weiwei and said that she did not care what Ai Weiwei did, and she also felt that Ai Weiwei had nothing to do with her. Our sensitivity to identity and the relationship between identity and individual actual work and activity, in fact, related to the

need for the identification of the importance of one's self. However, in Shen Xin's view, this is related more with her way of working and with her understanding of art. For example, the artist's creation (especially visual creation) is considered to be expression and reproduction:

I may not agree with the so-called mainstream aesthetics or other practices that the relationship between a work and an artist is taken for granted as a "representative" relationship - that the artist considers himself as an artist, and he creates a work to express this. This approach itself should be questioned, and this relationship should be abandoned. ...My creation is a reflection of the process of thinking, not the performance of an established thing, for I completely opposed the representative mechanism. In addition, the work I create is organic by itself, it is an organic thing woven out of the way of thinking. When a viewer is watching, it is an exposed state, but it must be independent of "obedience". ... A well-written writer does not exactly want to convey what he means, leaving you the only choice of receiving. Instead, you can devote into his thinking processes and think about your own problem with his thoughts. I advocate the practice of taking art works as tools.

After reading her statement, we can better understand why she hopes to be seen as a researcher and what she means by researching. General scientific research will set out from one or a series of interrelated issues, and set the object and scope of the study, using one or a variety of research methods as well as logical guidance to get results; if Shen Xin was a researcher, then what is her research method? According to her words, it is "related things in her eyes, just like I think there is something associated with it, a bit like studying a network, how it is made, how it is formed, and then pull some points out of the network to see them and the structure with other networks. Surely this method is with a certain degree of subjectivity and selectivity, but these texts or objects for selection are already there, so this is a more complex, more complicated way with more pressure. You have to see a lot (books, movies, etc.), and then to connect unrelated things." And the results of her research are works. Shen's works are mostly presented in the form of images, but they also contain the process of their birth, and often with some new technical means, as well as the collaboration of others; In addition, the vision is often just one dimension of these images, we can also often experience the works through the sound, text, animation and on-site interaction.

But just as many identities do not exist in isolation, but endowed and coexist with their systems and the environment, today, the artist is an artist for he can hold exhibition in a non-profit space or institutions, or be entrusted to create new works, or to participate in the stations around the world, or apply for funds from a variety of cultural and artistic funds, cultural and artistic institutions and even commercial brands, and even artist visa.

Thus, as an identity, the artist not only exists in public opinion or the economic circulation system of art market, but also be a channel for the source of funds, or a note on the living conditions. Zhang Ding's "clean sweep" Project in Rockbund Art Museum "encaged" a large group of activists in Chinese contemporary art circles into a golden cage and broadcast them on live. He took himself as a researcher, but in the eyes of majority of relevant institutions, professionals and viewers, she was still an artist. The complexity of this system, which makes the artist an artist, must be much weaker than that which makes us what we are. The so-called problem of identity has a history of its own. Shen thinks that identity cannot be discussed in isolation, in fact, what should be discussed is the complexity: "My work is actually the view of complexity. The so-called complexity is not to say that an identity is formed by many things, rather that there are many fragile things in the process of formation, and many things which are irreplaceable and cannot be told. How can these things be kept in my images or when other watch them — including A and B. I think it is a process of building a system to keep fragile and complex things looping, constantly improving, and constantly building."

Shen Xin is a native of Chengdu, and her father is a painter (on the left side of the door in this exhibition hall, there is a painting of her father hanging on the wall next to the preface). In her work "Counting Blesses (2014)", father and daughter went to Tibet together, continuing father's multi-year "tradition" of painting portraits of ethnic minorities. The artist, with punk-styled short hair acted as her father's assistant and photographer on the plateau. These shooting materials, together with family record-styled video fragments of her dialogue with father recorded in Chengdu and her painting practices, were all edited into this film. The creation of images is no stranger to her; instead, such familiarity makes it easier for her to establish an examination of the relationship between images and the so-called realities represented by them, and to recognize the limitations. The income of her father as an artist is sufficient for family costs and supports Shen Xin to study abroad, and it is also an object for observation and restoration of a certain relationship in this "joint creation". Many artists have invited their loved ones to participate in the creation, integrating the co-operation relations and kinship. Here, even the creation is integrated.

02 Acquaintances

I first met Shen Xin in a selection activity, she being one of the applicants while I sat between the judges. Because of the project requirements, she needed to state in English. I was pleasantly surprised by her eloquence and fascinated with the obvious state of thoughtfulness and the high degree of self-control in her narrative. She did not express feelings much, but it also seemed natural. Since then, we have maintained contact, and

once tried to cooperate on a potential project, but later it came to nothing due to time constraints. Writing this article, I read the following words of Shen Xin, and find it interesting:

I gradually develop a rather awkward habit. When I meet a person, or when I'm introduced to someone, I conceive a possible cooperation, which sometimes comes out of thin air. Like I said, it depends on how I relate my practice to people, images, events, and so on.

This shows a curiosity, goodwill and openness, and a sense of humor (Perhaps few people use humor to describe Shen and her works, but in "Giant's Shoulders (2015)", the expression of four scholars working in Europe: Esther Leslie, Hannah Black, Mark Fisher and Simon O'Sullivan in their speech were captured and transformed into innocent, blunt cartoon characters (which originated from "Shang Hai Jing"). This approach seems funny, and we can easily observe a funny phenomenon which we are familiar with: When one person talks, the other three tend to show impatient look or simply close their eyes meditatively; of course, their expressions inevitably suffered deformation and distortion due to dynamic capture and animation generation technology limitations). At the same time, it also explains that many of Shen's projects will collaborate with people in different fields, who will soundtrack for her films, translate texts in films, create animations, or act as guests and models, etc. These collaborations also tend to be participatory, and collaborators do not merely perform assigned tasks, but participate in the process of conceiving the work and extend the skills of the respective contributions in the sense of how they relate to the work. Such intertexture, wrapped in a kind of initiative, perhaps also echoed this "awkward habit" of Shen Xin.

Shen Xin has lived abroad for many years, and has studied and lived in Singapore and the UK, and she has been to other regions and countries in Northern Europe and South Korea due to assignment and projects. The experience and status of sojourn have made it easier for her to access some of the more recent international publications and to have more opportunities to interact and collaborate with people from all walks of life.

03 Home in Specific Time and Space

Shen Xin's solo exhibition "At Home" held in Wuhan Surplus Space tries to examine the state of being "at home". She claims to call "home" a frontier. She asks what is "home", and even questions the necessity of "home", examining people's desire and resistance to "home" through five videos on display, hence emphasizing the need for identity and the complexity of identity scrutiny.

With dim light, the exhibition hall is not a warm home-like one which makes you feel kind. Who said home is kind and warm? The right side of the space is a quadrangular walkable

space, with a table in the middle and four benches facing four screens, which play the strange cartoon characters who are talking: four-eye baby face, frog, one-eyed monster, four-ear monkey. Their voices can be heard with headphones, but the scene is also filled with voices from other screens, they vaguely overlap and will not interfere with each other. A translucent wall stands between this walkable space and a people-tall projection screen, in front of which there are some randomly scattered cushions. You can still see the back of the projection in the back of this projection screen — opposite and active pictures on left and right. There is a chair in front of both box-type TVs on half-person high bases symmetrically at right and left corner, which is an invitation for individual viewing. In the slightly smaller room on the left, almost the whole wall is projected in the room, and a bench is placed opposite the wall close to the entrance, thus the distance between the viewer and the film is the length of the room. This is my impression of the “At Home” exhibition, that is, the viewers are arranged, and the works also have their own relatively complete and independent space. I don’t feel particularly obvious absence, and the distance and space of “presented” people and things are also thoughtfully arranged. In the process of walking, standing, sitting down, watching and listening, I carry the query of the concept of “home”.

Recently, Edward Snowden, former US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent, known for PRISM event, accepted an interview by former chief editor of the British “Guardian” (it is exactly this media first published that CIA was monitoring all American people in 2013), and talked about his “sense of home” and his patriotism towards motherland America:

His schedule “basically” followed US Eastern Standard Time, and he spent most of wake time on the internet, “but I have been so”. He admitted that he missed the “home feeling” of the America, “but the technology has largely overcome this separation. For me, I was a bit like an expatriate staff, remember, I once signed for the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency to work overseas, so this is not much different from my work overseas for USA.”

...

“I cannot improve the human rights situation in Russia, and to be honest, my first concern is to improve my own country first, because it is where my greatest loyalty belongs. It may not change anything, but it might play a role.”

After being wanted, he came to Russia from Hawaii, apparently, even if he wanted to return to his own country, he still faced many obstacles; in Europe, Julian Assange, founder of Wikileaks, is still trapped in the Ecuadorian Embassy. I do not want to talk about politics, in fact, I know very little about politics; yet I realize that politics, like the artist, should not be just an overly preconceived concept; broad media and social networks provide unprecedented convenience for people to know about politics, and the two apparently re-

ceived a lot of attention in these channels. The situation of the two leakers came to my mind when I think about the concept of “home”. Compared with their situation, we share the commonness of spending a lot of time on internet (though we are poles apart on technical level). I guess they will not skip eat, exercise, sleep, ect. (Assange is a little fat, while Snowden looks almost unchanged compared with three years ago); however, if I would be reluctant to regard the accommodation I return everyday as “home” (of course not only because it was a living space, but also because I shared it with my husband), then they obviously do not see their current living places as a home. In everyday context, residence, as a place to return, is often referred to as “home”, but apparently the “home” Shen Xin wants to discuss about have wider and more complex meanings. These two leakers may be the kind of public figure that allows us to reflect on Shen’s questions about “home”. If home means a sense of belonging, then what is the category of belonging? A country? A group? A family? Friends we once worked with and take as brothers and sisters? A marriage and relationship? Then our desire for belonging, if disassembled into a sense of security, resistance to loneliness, or even love or more abstract happiness, then what does this sense of belonging mean when you are not free (whether physically or consciously, regardless of the external imprisonment or conscious or unconscious self)?

The reason why the leakers are at present situation lies in that their actions are identified as illegal and harmful by the authorities. Snowden revealed the fact that the Americans were monitored by the CIA. He chose to reveal this fact to public through media, and there are two films about him (documentary and drama); Assange recruits leakers to upload secrets through the online platform of WikiLeaks. This year marks the 20th anniversary of WikiLeaks, and the recent uploaded secret include some mail records of Hillary Clinton, current US presidential candidate. When the secrets are placed in the public eye, their influence on the state of our existence can be more openly discussed. And this process from secret to public also occurs in Shen Xin’s videos too, only that the process is not as direct as from visible to invisible; it has multiple levels. When the video edits the various video clips together, the multiple spatiotemporal occurrences are placed in the same timeline, and each time when the viewer enters (I tend to use the word enter, not watch), he enters a specific space-time built in the film. Here, faced with beheaded familiar or unfamiliar images, content, and events, the viewer is able to follow, but at the same time discretely think about them. Even for news events that have been made public - for example, Chinese entrepreneurs rebuilt the London Crystal Palace with huge investment (“The Book of Rites”, 2014) - after being re-edited with other texts and images by Shen Xin, the originally open state appears to be secret, while it inexplicably becomes clear when being broken, dismantled and reorganized with the Analects of Confucius and words of the artist.

04 Writing, Language

Writing is a process of continuous superposition and reduction. If Shen Xin's creation is compared with writing, it is certainly not spectacular, what it shows is not a picture of an alpaca stretching its head out of a taxi in New York. It is also probably anti-storytelling, even though the story or narratives inevitably exist naturally in mediums such as language and images. As a viewer, I do not think she doesn't have any intention to distinguish between imaginary and non-fiction. The broken, disassembled, and reconstructed images, languages, and sounds blur the interfaces of imagination and non-fiction with nonlinear narratives. It can be argued that these literal films provide an alternative (as compared to news) way to understand what is happening in the world.

Writing, and the use and construction of language penetrate Shen Xin's creative ways and processes:

The formation of a so-called language is also a process of how to carry out an artistic creation. While I put so-called aesthetics and artist in a place for "reflection", many things can be subjects of thinking, so in every creation, I would know the technical content of it, why it is like this, and how it is connected with my works. Every time is a new way of thinking. In this way, I hope to not form a fixed language system, but a mobile language system.

But on the fiction, the artist may not agree with my above argument, for in my conversation with her, she said:

Me: You once said that the process of making a film for you is similar to writing, layer by layer. In my understanding, from the functional point of view, writing may be divided into descriptive, analytical, illustrative, and so on. You mentioned earlier that shooting a film is like writing a fiction, then why do you want to emphasize this fiction (if the definition of novel contains fiction), rather than other types of text?

Shen: Because it is creating another kind of space, with a very clear function, although it is not a utopian space, without some ideal ideas. As an existence totally irrelevant with Utopia, it has space, where there are many complex and complicated things on this direction or level. In such a case, you have to go to watch it, you can go beyond it, and it is such a violent space.

05 Time, Violence

How do we experience time and its passage? The sense of time is difficult to measure, and often associated with the person we co-exist with or being alone. We will feel anxious when waiting, thinking time flies slowly; we also feel time flies when we are with beloved people.

The changeable sense of time is just as what relativity theory says, time is changeable (compressible or bulky, non-linear).

Is there an analogy between entering an exhibition site, entering a work, and accepting a one-on-one service (such as massage, hairdressing, beauty)? When you receive the service, another person (usually a stranger) co-exists with you for a period of time and even comes to your home in door-to-door service; when you enter the work and exhibition, you spend time to enter a piece of time and space built by the artist (another person, it seems funny to need to emphasize), coexisting with some sensible existences that try to inspire your reflection. The former will achieve a specific effect (relaxed neck, or new hairstyle, or brightened skin color), what about the latter? Time is spent, but not in the way of costing money, and its effect is hoped to not be expected. Or, the work's invitation for you spending time is nonconsumption; it doesn't intend to cater to your needs, but exists as an accessible space-time.

Shen Xin thinks that it is a kind of violence to require viewer sit there and see from video A to video B:

Shen: First of all, my main (creative) media is the image; it's a very violent behavior to ask the viewer to see from A to B. Of course, many people will not see them all. So I have the interest to play my film in cinema, for in this way, the time could be controlled. The viewers are not only watching, but watching them all, and watch in this constructed time and space.

Me: in cinema?

Shen: yes, the way of showing, rather than that of exhibition. (When visiting an exhibition, you can enter or leave at any moment of the work.)

Me: so this is your preferential way to present works?

Shen: Yes.

Me: It means to force people to enter the space.

Shen: Yes, and then spend the time and energy to watch them inside. After watching, such a process is my first choice of a way, during which a lot of things can be formed. For example, when I watch TV, I would think various things, not just watch for leisure. This is because it will pile up time, which makes you much room for thinking. As for other ways, I may now be more concerned about the theme of assimilated violence, which exists in many things, including the violence of religious immigrants being assimilated in culture, and the movement of being assimilated in interests.

“Violence” is a high-frequency term repeatedly mentioned by Shen Xin, and the corresponding high-frequency vocabulary “materialized” can be understood as a common

means of violence. She is particularly sensitive to the violence implicit in language (for instance, the phrases of “Kinkakuji” quoted in “Paying Criticism (2015)”. This post-war novel by Japanese writer Yukio Mishima described the change of a young man’s attitudes towards beauty, destruction, eternal life, and death from the first person’s angle.), the manifestation of the wild violence or even war or male violence in her films (“Snow Country (2013)” contains the oral narratives of Chinese women about Japanese’s sexual assault in the Nanjing Massacre, while the title of the work is also reflection of Japanese writer Kawabata Yasunari’s thinking about male and female identities in his novel of the same name),so she is also particularly concerned about the specific groups that control discourse power and the isolated and skimmed off groups (for example, the excluded female groups from different geographies and cultures when discussing about feminism), this can also be connected with the earlier discussion of “identity”. In private conversations with her (in this paper, my conversations with her were public), she wrote:

In other words, identity must have a new language system to discuss, including a group of white female artists who advocate post-network feminism; their works generally describe the network’s reflectivity of female body, and take materialization as a subversive behavior, thus ignoring that the bodies of many groups are outside the network, technology, and are still being materialized. In fact, I am very interested in comparative literature, and have a very alert awareness of European context I study previously in fields of philosophy and theory. “At Home” means a state of need and resistance.

I once wrote in the memorandum such a sentence: the resistance to emotion is precisely the obsession with it. So the resistance to be “at home” may also be out of infatuation with it?

06 Technique

We will also realize that Shen Xin uses technique in her creation. She doesn’t see it as a mere tool, but also incorporates the meaning of the birth, evolution and development of technology into the context of the work. She thinks it’s necessary to consider the meaning of the technique when using any kind of technique:

Why is there something like weaving imagery sound libraries? When you use it, you must understand how it occurs. When you enter a word like “critic” in the program, the word becomes something like kh r I t I k, so why would I want to do a movie with a program similar to onomatopoeia? The relationship between it and my film, the so-called aesthetics and language forming, is what must consider. I need to consider how this procedure is formed, rather than assume that I have a concept that the sound made by it will better suit my work. Taking 3D motion capture as an instance, what data does it

need in growth? I need to train it, train that cartoon image, and make it recognize my face, so that it can do what I want to do with my face. The process of training itself is meaningful, and it is the process you obey it. These are the things I have to consider, they are not just a form or an empty shell.

07 Realistic Surface and Flowing Blood Vessel Under It

Me: Your work is a bit like to take out the production process which is in fact behind the scenes of a film, and takes them as object for study and thinking.

Shen: Correct. I think the biggest difference between my video and the film in cinema is that I will present the whole ecosystem, not show them all, but they have a connection in the process of creation, and this network is inseparable.

Me: Just like all the five pieces we saw this time, they all showed an appearance of mixed edit. Material from different directions were mixed, edited and presented in this film. Such practice makes people aware of the operation behind it, as you say, the whole ecosystem.

Conclusion

When writing this article, I have been uneasy for a long time to start, for Shen Xin's large amount of writing (including the words in her video works, her self-introduction and works of introduction and some discourses) are heavy words with dense concepts and terms; yet I decide to put all the relevant information aside, trying to start writing without any burden, and add necessary seasonings (as you can see, some excerpts of her words). I hope that after spending quite some time reading this article, you can get another time and space for thinking with this text and would be like to enter Shen Xin's works.

*A Mao is obviously a pseudonym for an active art writer, editor, translator and curator.

1与张朶的对谈，2015年3月，上海新时线媒体艺术中心

2与林家勤的对谈，2015年12月，上海新时线媒体艺术中心

3选自《与FT共进午餐：爱德华·斯诺登》，<http://www.ftchinese.com/story/001069482?page=4>，英文原文：
He lives “mainly” on Eastern Standard Time and spends most of his waking hours online — “but it always has been so”. He admits he misses the “sense of home” represented by America, “but technology overcomes most of that divide. For me, I’m a little bit of an outlier to begin with because, remember, I signed up to go work overseas for the CIA and overseas for the NSA. So it’s really not that much different from the postings that I had for the US.” 原文链接：<https://www.ft.com/content/4a8750f4-74e6-11e6-b60a-de4532d5ea35>

⁴选自《与FT共进午餐：爱德华·斯诺登》，<http://www.ftchinese.com/story/001069482?page=4>，英文原文：“I can’t fix the human rights situation in Russia, and realistically my priority is to fix my own country first, because that’s the one to which I owe the greatest loyalty. But though the chances are it will make no difference, maybe it’ll help.”，原文链接：<https://www.ft.com/content/4a8750f4-74e6-11e6-b60a-de4532d5ea35>

⁵与张昶的对谈，2015年3月，上海新时线媒体艺术中心

⁶与张昶的对谈，2015年3月，上海新时线媒体艺术中心