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# Interruptions

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with photographs by **David Clarke** and essays by **Xu Xi**

影 — 祈大衛 文 — 許素細

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The shadow knew, the shadow always knows. Peter Pan lost his, the Pied Piper's disappeared along with the rats and children of Hamelin, an agonized memory to taunt the greed of those left behind, the ones who would not pay the piper his due.



香港大學美術博物館  
University Museum and Art Gallery  
The University of Hong Kong

## FOREWORD 前言 | Christopher Mattison, Associate Curator, UMAG | 香港大學美術博物館副館長 馬德松

Within the context of museum publications, words are often relegated to the role of analytically grounding an exhibition within an artistic continuum, or emotively describing the visual world into syllables. The ekphrastic tradition—of narrating a work of art—stands as a discrete artistic form. Over the eras the term has referred to a verbal or written description of an object or experience, a poem inspired by a work of art, as well as a means with which to contest modes of literary realism. *Interruptions* incorporates aspects of each of these, with a particular emphasis on personal interpretation and visuals that act as a trigger for memories—both real and imagined.

The spine of this current project is a series of interlocking images and texts that began with a single photograph selected from David Clarke's archive. Xu Xi then wrote an essay triggered by—but not necessarily in response to—that photograph, which led to David's choice of a second work. The 12 images and essays construct a fascinating palimpsest of memoir and artistic expression. By "interrupting" each other's lives with a piece of art from a dueling medium, the artists were compelled to reevaluate their own histories and creative output. What is ultimately created is a form of linked poem or *renga*, though without the strict stanzaic limitation of that particular form.

In the mid-'90s, David Clarke and UMAG collaborated on a similar reevaluation of the creative and curatorial processes through an exhibition series known as *Engaging Tradition*. In the second of these exhibitions, the late author Leung Ping-kwan chose items from UMAG's archaeological collection and then wrote poems in response to the individual pieces. This collaboration was interesting both for the writing generated from the museum pieces, as well as for the curatorial process employed in transforming the pottery and bronze into sherds of creative writing.

UMAG is grateful to David Clarke and Xu Xi for their collaboration, and we look forward to presenting further "interruptions" that delve into a range of issues, including the role of the museum in contemporary society and the relationship between contemporary artists and traditional art forms.

在博物館出版物的語境下，文字擔當的角色是分析展覽在藝術發展中的一席之地，或聲情並茂地描繪視覺的世界。敘畫傳統源遠流長，今天它仍然是一種獨立的藝術形式。過去這個術語指，用口頭或書寫的方式來描述物件或經驗，從藝術作品汲取靈感的詩歌，又或者用來抗衡文字寫實模式的一種手段。《斷續》融合了以上種種，並強調個人的闡釋和視覺能夠觸發真實和想像的記憶。

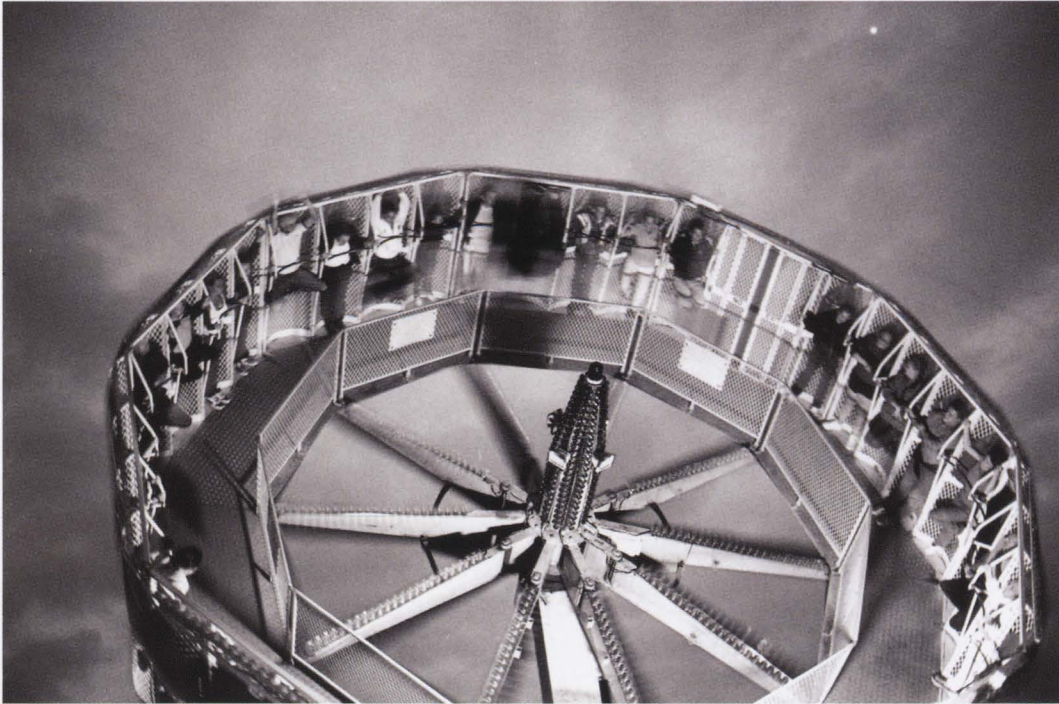
本次展覽的軸心是一系列環環相扣的影像和文字。它始於一幀攝影，選自祈大衛的作品集；然後，許素細根據這幀攝影寫一篇文章。許素細文章是由祈大衛的攝影所觸發，而未必對其作出回應。祈大衛又根據許素細文字選出下一幀攝影作品。如此循環往復，最終十二件影像和文字作品重新書寫和呈現回憶，令人陶醉。藝術作品出自挑鬥式對話媒介，藝術家的生活被它「打斷」了，不得不重新審視自己的經歷和創作。最終，他們創作出一種「連歌」，然而他們的作品並不受限於詩歌形式上的限制。

一九九〇年代中，祈大衛與香港大學美術博物館合作，通過舉辦一系列名為「參與傳統」的展覽，重新審視創作和策展的過程。香港作家梁秉鈞（筆名也斯）參與了該系列的第二場展覽。他從香港大學美術博物館中選出考古藏件，並作詩回應。該次合作十分有趣，不僅博物館館藏誘發了詩歌，而且策展過程將陶瓷和青銅轉化成寫作的斷章片語。

香港大學美術博物館感謝祈大衛與許素細的合作，我們期待展出更多「斷續」，探索各式各樣的課題，包括博物館在當代社會中充當的角色，當代藝術家與傳統藝術形式之間的關係等等。



**BRACELET** Fairground scene, Paignton, Devon, England, 10 AUGUST 1999



Fascination for these bright, shiny things, glittering away in alarmed store windows. Stores where armed security guards stand discreetly in corners, where the well-mannered and well-dressed serve, where you no longer have to be especially well-dressed anymore to be served, because jeans and flip flops are designer labeled now, and the world has returned full circle to the souk, fair, bazaar, the marketplace along a dusty road side where a trader stops enroute, unrolls his stash to display that resplendent thing, and we, the ordinary people, we gaze and crave, gaze and crave, until the day of reckoning finally arrives, when enough coins have been hoarded, and we resolve to buy.

**WALKING ON WATER** Venice, Italy, with a view of the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, 10 JUNE 2011



. . . my mother found God at the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus in Singapore. There she was, swinging on the star of her diligent, clever student life, reciting Chinese homework, when suddenly, she stopped, and all that Chinese went right out of her head. In that moment her faith was sealed, and she converted to Catholicism. Or at least that was more or less how she told it. The connection between forgetting her Chinese and acquiring faith was something I never fully understood. As a child, however, I didn't dare question faith, not when uttered in complete seriousness by the most dominant authority figure in your life. Besides, I would happily have abandoned Chinese in favor of those heady religious rites, since it was a far, far easier thing to master piety than to actually master Chinese vocabulary.

## FEAR ITSELF

The Promenade des Anglais, Nice, France, 18 JULY 2011



The first man I loved water-skied. . . . I was nineteen. Previously, I had been in love numerous times but the subjects of my passions never had any idea of my deep, true love, probably because each lasted only until the next desirable male image presented itself, something which happened with alarming frequency. Falling in love is an exhausting heart sport; the muscles get a thorough workout and if the love is unrequited (which almost all mine were), then you simply get back on that love treadmill and try again. Persistence.

## THE LIGHT

Ganden Monastery, Tibet, 23 JUNE 2010



The past is geography, memory an unreliable map. Longitude and latitude belong to homework that confounded my nine-year-old mind. Scientific precision ensures a common, factual language: the secondary arc of the double rainbow is a mirror image of the first. Yet my eye does not distinguish primary and secondary arcs or the reverse color scheme.

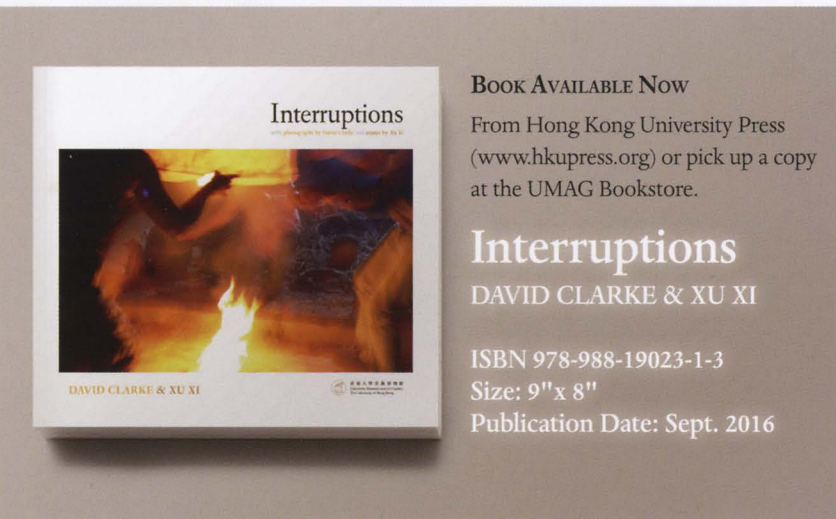


## ATTEMPTING TO ALIGHT

Launching a sky lantern during the Mid-Autumn Festival,  
Sheung Wo Hang Village, North East New Territories,  
Hong Kong, 6 OCTOBER 2006



It is easier to finish a life before it ends in the home that most feels like home. A room to read. Air to breathe. Food untainted by fear. The sound of silence. Drainage. Peregrinations were never really more spiritual, just as eras and places that seem more religious are something of an historical *trompe d'oeil*.



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## Interruptions

DAVID CLARKE & XU XI

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