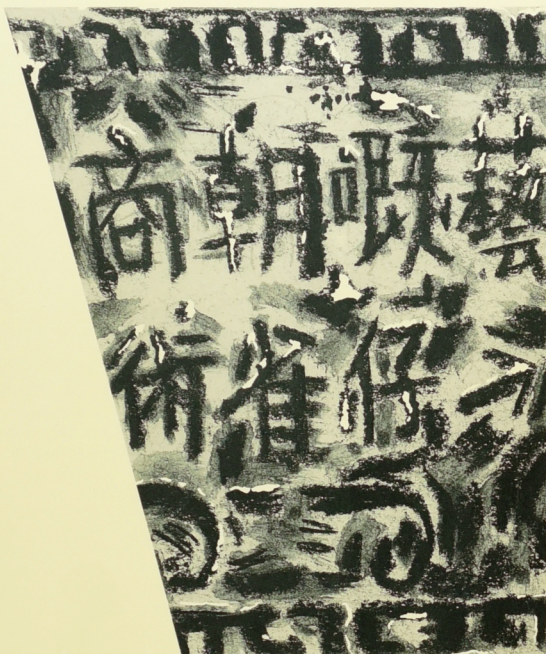


AN EXHIBITION ABOUT ART AND ABOUT EXHIBITION — 一個關於藝術和關於展覽的展覽



ENGAGING TRADITION 參與傳統 VIOLATION 侵犯



一個邀請藝術工作者參與
回應，馮平山博物館內
永久藏品的展覽



An exhibition in which an artist is
invited to engage with the permanent collection
of the Fung Ping Shan Museum



Artist : Oscar Ho
Exhibition Venue : Fung Ping Shan Museum,
The University of Hong Kong.
Exhibition Date : 19 March - 8 May 1994

藝術工作者：何慶基
展覽場地：香港大學馮平山博物館
展期：一九九四年三月十九日至五月八日



ENGAGING TRADITION VIOLATION

ENGAGING TRADITION David Clarke

Engaging Tradition arose from a number of different questions and observations. One such question concerns the relation of artists nowadays to their artistic heritage. Many modernist artists consciously rejected a concern with the art of the past, sought to create a break with it in their own work. For such artists tradition was perceived as a burden. Vlamnick, for instance, wrote: "I never go to museums. I avoid their odor, their monotony and severity." More recently, however, 'post-modern' artists have been more interested in turning to past styles as a source for their art, and through strategies of parody - for instance have even allowed the past into their work. Could such artists offer us a way of looking anew at tradition (and at the museum as the custodian of tradition)? The sense that museums are places where the past lies embalmed is after all one which many people - not just modernist artists - share. Could artists play a part in bringing the past back to life for us, in offering a new and vital engagement with it?

In considering the relationship of artists to tradition we should not conceive of differing relations to a fixed past. We know the past only through our images of it (images obtained from history books, for example, but also from museum displays) and so the past is not a fixed factor in this equation. A museum display or a college curriculum presents us with an interpretation of the past, a partial view of it (in both senses of that word). One must always ask whose history is being represented, (that is, question what interests a certain view of history serves, or ask what other histories are being occluded from view). The characteristic mode of display in the art museum involves the isolation of objects from one another, often against bare white walls. Such a display offers a feigned neutrality, as if it were history itself which was speaking, rather than a certain curatorial picture of it. Such a mode of presentation dissembles; it presents an argument as if it were merely an array of things. The standard exhibition catalogue (which tends to concern itself with telling you the dimensions of the work, its previous owners, the names and dates of other exhibitions in which the artist has appeared, and so forth) colludes with this approach. By inviting an artist to share their own view of tradition, that is, by foregrounding the personal or relative nature of the curatorial process, perhaps the question of curatorial authority can be addressed within the very site in which it operates. Much has been written in recent years about the role of the museum and the way in which it functions (often implicitly rather than explicitly) as an agent of certain epistemological (not to mention political) positions, and the time is ripe for museums to become engaged (at the level of their displays) in this discussion. The role of the museum is as much the subject of this project as is tradition.

In this century artists have very often been drawn to use ready-made objects as the material of their art, and in recent years there has been a lot of interest in installation work. Artists have become less interested in making discrete, self-contained objects, and have started to consider (and to us) the whole environment in which they are exhibiting. For these reasons it is a particularly opportune time to offer artists an opportunity to treat a museum collection as their palette, and a specific museum space as the site to which their artistic endeavours are directed. Given that the Fung Ping Shan museum is primarily a museum of Chinese art, Engaging Tradition offers an added opportunity: it enables us to see how Hong Kong artists relate to the Chinese heritage. Without prejudging the form that encounter may take in any particular case, it is this writer's observation (made as an outsider) that many Hong Kong people approach that heritage with a degree of ambivalence. Chinese traditions may be very engaging, but one engages with an enemy as well as getting engaged to a loved one. One might wish to be active in this encounter, to use or tradition? Do we engage with it, or is it engaging (fascinating, captivating, enthralling) us?

I have been writing here about Hong Kong artists in the plural, rather than referring to the one Hong Kong artist, Oscar Ho Hing-kay, who has been involved in turning the concept of Engaging Tradition into a reality. I have done this, I suppose, because I conceived this project without any one artist in mind, and because I hope that it will become in time a series of exhibitions - that it will have a life beyond this one incarnation. Oscar Ho is, however, an entirely appropriate choice as the first artist to be involved with Engaging tradition. Since he is the exhibitions director of the Hong Kong Arts Centre as well as an artist, he has already had to consider curatorial issues, to look at exhibitions from a point of view other artists are able to avoid. He is also appropriate in that he belongs to the younger generation Hong Kong artists who grew up in this city, and therefore take it as their primary frame of reference. For artists of this generation, unlike their seniors who were often born and educated on the mainland, Chinese cultural tradition are less immediate and there is therefore a more fruitful basis for an encounter of the kind Engaging Tradition contemplates. I do not wish to suggest that Oscar Ho is unaware of Chinese art, but there is nevertheless a sense in which he, and other Hong Kong artists of his generation, are less deeply invested in it. Because traditional Chinese art is, from his perspective, only one resource amongst many on which he can draw, there is a chance that an encounter with it might produce something more novel than in the case of an artist who has always considered his or her work to be deeply informed by the Chinese artistic heritage.

ABOUT VIOLATION Oscar Ho

As a curator and an artist, the idea of <Engaging Tradition> is absolutely irresistible.

The intention to engage an artist with his own cultural tradition is interesting. The question is - what is my cultural tradition?

Having spent some time looking at the collection at the Fung Ping Shan Museum, my response to this collection of Chinese antiques, which could easily be a symbolic representation of the great Chinese cultural heritage, was simply a cold indifference. These ancient pots and containers have little to do with me or with the history I am identified with.

Ironically the strongest feeling I have in response to the collection is a sense of violation. Some sorts of cultural roots have been imposed onto me.

The idea of violation fascinates me: the violation of culture, the violation of the 'grand' tradition' against the 'personal', and the violation of interpretation.

I am given the total freedom to work within the space. Immediately I am confronted with a problem: should I make one single statement with a powerful impact, or should I deal with the many and somewhat disorganised ideas I have in a rather scattered way.

I choose the latter, probably because the space stimulates too much thoughts and ideas. I want to make art in response to the collection, I want to make art which comments on 'exhibition' itself, most important of all, I want to talk about the violation of cultures. The exhibition does not present a wholistic idea, but rather fragments of responses I have to the collection, as a curator and as an artist. Frequently an exhibition would try to present a consistent, wholistic view of reality, while reality has always been a chaotic flux of scattered, sometimes contradictory ideas.

Each exhibition is an interpretation. Depends on how forceful an idea is imposed onto the works, the interpretation could easily turn into a brutal violation. As a curator, the idea of how a museum could easily manipulate works of art always fascinates me. The physical presence of the museum itself, the collection the museum chooses to display, the format of presentation, the order of arrangement, the caption, the press release, the lighting..... practically every aspect of an exhibition can alter the meaning of the exhibits.

Art has always been used as symbol of a culture. An exhibition of art can also be a statement on culture. The collection does generate some thoughts on 'cultural violation'. At the cultural level, the violation is less obvious although it is more aggressive. We are told we are Chinese, but I cannot respond to these pots and pans from Shan or Zhou dynasties. (Maybe the other parts of Chineseness, the Chinese food, the Lai-si of Chinese New Year could be a bit more meaningful).

Recently the phrase 'being Chinese' has become so repressive that it becomes a from of violation. It is been used by politicians and political opportunists as a tool to measure ideological and behavioural correctness.

With the great Chinese culture at its back, Hong Kong culture seems, on the one hand, pale and fragile, but on the other hand, surprisingly energetic and even aggressive. Cultural violation is not one sided. Hong Kong culture also has its invading aggression.

At another level, there is the violation through exhibition installation and interpretation. The museum has never provide an objective space for art 'to speak for itself' I am fascinated by the various meaning created through different formats of presentation.

As an artist, I am also tempted to make art, to make art in response to some of the images I see, and to relate them to my very own experience. Some of the exhibits make no sense, they are there simply for fun. It is important for art to have fun. When I install other people's exhibitions occasionally I have this incredible desire to add something silly onto the display, just for the heck of it. And now I can do it, thanks to the generosity of the Fung Ping Shan Museum.

I would like to thank Dave for pursuing this interesting curatorial idea, and to Dr. Michael Lau and Mr. C. T. Yeung for their support of this rather unusual project (not every curator is willing to take up unusual project like this), and to the many people who have helped to make this exhibition possible, especially to my parents and wife Carman, who provide much practical support and inspiration.

AN EXHIBITION ABOUT ART AND ABOUT EXHIBITION



一個關於藝術和關於展覽的展覽

參與傳統 祈大偉

"參與傳統"源於幾個關於觀看的问题,其中一個的问题涉及今天的藝術工作者與其藝術傳統的關係。很多現代藝術工作者刻意地拒斥過往的藝術,試圖藉其創作與之決裂。對這類藝術工作者來說,傳統被視作一種負擔。例如維明克(Vlamnick)便曾寫道:「我從不去藝術博物館,我要逃避它的味道、呆滯和嚴肅。」但是近代的「後現代」藝術工作者對重返傳統作其創作泉源重感興趣,藉一些創作策略如比喻,將過去帶入作品中。這些藝術工作者能否提供新的觀點去看傳統(甚至進而去看博物館,那傳統的看護者)?畢竟除了現代藝術工作者外,一般人也相信博物館是過去得以藏身的地方。究竟藝術工作者能否將過去重新注入生命,提供新穎及具活力的參與?

當考慮藝術工作者和傳統的關係時,我們不應從一個固定的「過去」去分別各種關係。我們只能從我們擁有的形象(例如來自歷史書、以及來自博物館展覽的形象)中認識過去,因此在這裏過去並不是個固定的東西。一個博物館展覽,或一個大學課程,為我們提供的是個對過去的演譯,一個局部而又具個人偏好的觀點。我們必須問,正在展現的究竟是誰的歷史(即是質疑究竟某種歷史觀的出現,是用來照顧誰的利益?或是問究竟有些甚麼歷史被埋沒隱藏了?)藝術博物館內典型的展示形式,往往將展品與其他物分離,將它們置於空白牆前。這種展覽形式塑造一種虛假的中立性,好像它讓歷史本身現身說法,而不是個展覽籌劃出來的景象。這種展覽形式隱瞞了現實,它好像只是有系統地擺放東西,實際上展示爭議的題目。標準的展覽場刊(一般傾向於告訴作品的大小,其過往的收藏者,其創作藝術工作者過往參加的展覽的名稱和日期等資料)也隱晦地與這種展覽形式配合。藉邀請藝術工作者去分享他們對傳統的看法,即是將展覽籌備的個人性和相對性帶至前台,或許就在展覽籌辦的權力最鮮明的地方,帶出對展覽籌辦的質疑。近年有不少著作談論藝術博物館的角色及其所隱含多於高調的功能,作為一個展示某些知識及政治的態度。現在正是時候讓博物館在展覽展示形式層面上參與這討論。在這計劃內,博物館和傳統一樣都是討論的議題。

在我們這世紀,藝術工作者常以現成物作創作物料,近年更有不少對裝置藝術具特別興趣。藝術工作者對製作獨立,具自我生命的藝術的興趣相應減弱,改而全面考慮其整個展覽空間。基於這些原因,現正是適當時候,為藝術工作者提供一個藝術館的藏品,作為創作的素材,為他們提供一具體的藝術館的空間,讓他們的作品得以發展。考慮到馮平山博物館基本上是個收藏中國藝術品的博物館,「參與傳統」提供另一機會,它讓我們看到香港藝術工作者回應中國傳統。在接納不可一竹篙打一船人這觀念之餘,根據作者作為一個局外人的觀察,香港人對這中國傳統,往往抗拒拒絕迴避的態度。中國傳統可是十分具吸引力(engaging),但亦是與敵對關係(engages)甚或與愛侶盟訂(engaged)。我們要問,當我們與傳統接觸時,究竟是我們還是傳統扮演主角角色?究竟我們與它糾纏,還是因為它 engaging (充滿令人驚喜的吸引力)?

直至現在我仍整體地討論香港的藝術工作者,而不是直接地論及一個香港藝術工作者,那就是何慶基。他是應邀將「參與傳統」這觀念轉為一個實在的展覽。我這樣做是因為當我考慮這計劃時,我沒有具體考慮任何一位藝術工作者,而且我亦希望將來它可發展成一個展覽系列,希望在這展覽之後,它能夠繼續其生命。作為這系列展覽的首位展出者,何慶基是絕對適當人選。因為他是香港藝術中心的展覽總監,也是位藝術工作者,他必然要從展覽籌備的角度來看展覽,不能避過一些其他藝術工作者可以避過的觀點。另一個適合的條件,是因為他屬於較年青一代生於香港的藝術工作者,因此他們基本上仍以本地作為參考架構。這一代的藝術工作者和上一輩在國內出生和受教育的不同,中國文化對他們來說不是那麼直接,因此他們在「參與傳統」這類的思維中,可能有更豐富的成果。我不表示何慶基並不注意中國藝術,只不過某程度上,他和其他他同代的藝術工作者一樣,並沒有那麼深入的投入。因為中國傳統藝術,從他的角度來看,只是眾多資源的一部份,當他接觸中國藝術傳統時,他有可能比那些深悉中國藝術的人,更能創出具有新意的作品。



關於「侵犯」何慶基

作為一個展覽籌劃者及藝術工作者,「參與傳統」這展覽觀念其魅力沒法掩飾。

促使藝術工作者回應其文化傳統是個有趣的意念,問題是甚麼是我的文化傳統?花了些時間認真地看馮平山博物館的藏品,面對那些隨時可以象徵大中國文化的古物,我的反應是出奇的冷漠。這些古舊的器血和我,或我所認同的歷史,根本上拉不上甚麼特別密切的關係。

說來有點諷刺,我對這些藏品的最大反應,是一種「侵犯」某種文化根源「強加於我身上」。「侵犯」這點至少吸引我——文化的侵犯,「大傳統」對「個人」的侵犯,以及演譯的侵犯。這展覽我有絕對的自由在展場內做任何東西。我馬上面對的問題是:我應否只表達一個意念,以求強烈的單一效果,正如,還是散亂地處理各種浮現的意念。

我決定選擇後者的表達形式。我的創作,將用作回應這些藏品,也用作評論「展覽」本身,更重要的是,是用作討論文化的侵犯。這展覽並不展示一完整的意念,而是作為一位展覽籌劃者及藝術工作者面對藏品時的回應片斷。很多時候展覽希望提供一完整連貫的現實觀,但現實卻往往是錯亂而浮游不定,有時候甚麼是互相矛盾。

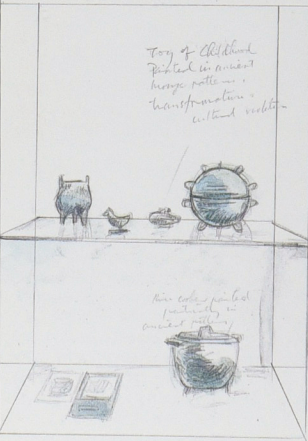
每個展覽都是個演譯,儘管程度有所不同,但這些演譯很容易發展成為粗暴的「侵犯」作為一個展覽籌劃者,藝術館如何改變藝術品的面貌,是個極有趣的命題。藝術館本身、展覽形式、編排次序、標題、新聞公佈、光線效果……差不多展覽的每個環節,均可刪改展品的意義。藝術很多時候被用作文化的象徵。藝術展覽可以是個文化上的宣言,這展覽亦導引關於「文化侵略」的思維。在文化的層面,這侵犯儘管可以很暴戾,但往往不是那麼明顯。我們常常自稱為中國人,但我對這些商周古物毫無反應。(或許另一些中國文化,例如中國農曆新年的利是可能會有意義些)。

近來「中國人」一詞變得甚具壓迫性,它甚至變成一種侵略。政治家及政治機會主義者往往大義凜凜地利用「中國人」一詞,去將某些行為合理化,或以它用作衡量思想及行動的正確性。在中國這強大文化的影子下,香港文化一方面顯得渺小脆弱,但另一方面卻又令人驚奇的充滿動力及具攻擊性。文化的侵略不是單向的。香港文化也有其侵略性。

在另一層面,展覽的擺設及演譯亦可是個侵犯。藝術館從未能提供一客觀空間讓藝術「自我表白」。不同的擺設如何製造不同意義令我感興趣。

作為一位藝術工作者,回應眼前所見,將之與個人經驗串連,然後創作藝術作品的衝動也頗重要。部份的展品並沒有甚麼特別意思,它們只是尋尋開心。讓藝術開開心心是很重要的。當我為其他人安排展覽時,很多時候有個衝動創造些很傻的東西,過一過癮。多謝馮平山博物館,我現在可以這樣做了!

我要向提供這有趣的展覽意念的新大街致謝,並向馮平山博物館館長及楊副館長致意,感謝他們對這奇特的支持(並不是每個藝術館館長都願意接納此類展覽),最後我要向所有幫助我的人致謝,特別是我的父母及太太,他們的支持一直是我的創作動力。



Biography 藝術家生平

Oscar Ho was born in Hong Kong in 1956 on a rainy, stormy day. Growing up at a turbulent time of great social unrest and intellectual turmoil, he decided to become an artist at age 3. After a long frustrating period of adolescence, he buried himself in the study of philosophy and theology, continued his passionate search for art and the meaning of life. At age 18, he left his beloved country and went to Saskatoon, Canada, and studied under the famous Canadian abstract expressionist and spiritual leader of the Canadian Bahai Faith, Mr. Otto Roger. After a long and painful period of soul searching and a self imposed torture of technical discipline, he continued his study at the University of California. Frustrated by his inability to actualise his artistic vision and further depressed by his failed romance with a

beautiful woman from the South, he fell into alcoholism and drug abuse. However, the anguish and desire for immortality through art kept him going. At this period he produced some of the most haunting images during his artistic career. After he finished his graduate study, he wandered around in California, like a homeless soul. Finally he decided to come back to his motherland, Hong Kong.

After he come back, he could not get a job. His parents got mad at him. So he becomes the exhibition director of the Hong Kong Arts Centre and wears tie to work, whenever, there is an opening or a meeting with sponsors. His favourite pastime is playing majong.

的創作理想,再加上他與一米自南方的美麗少女的戀愛失敗,令脆弱心靈備受創痛,他掉入酗酒和吸毒的深淵中。在這階段,他製作了在他創作生涯中最深沈淪人的形象。研究院畢業後,他在加州流浪,像一個無根的遊魂。最後他決定返回他的故土香港。

回港後他找不到工,父母不高興,於是 he 成了藝術中心的展覽總監。現在,如果有展覽開幕或要與贊助商開會,他還回打麻雀。他最大的嗜好是打麻雀。

何慶基生於一九五六年一個風雨飄搖之夜,生於社會動盪及知識界面對翻天覆地的他,三歲已決定成為藝術家。在充滿煩惱的青春期,他沉醉於神學及哲學的研究,渴求藝術的意義和人生的真諦。十八歲的他離開他熱愛的故土香港,往加拿大追尋他的夢。在加拿大沙省他跟隨著名加拿大抽象表現主義者及加拿大巴海教屬靈導師奧羅羅渣士學畢,經過一段長時間的心路 窺探歷程,以及自我折磨式的技術訓練,他孤獨地往加州大學繼續其探索,強烈藝術創作激情未能實現他

