

重新召回的寻常-萧昱的四个近作

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萧昱最近的几个作品不求如何天下无双，也不求闻所未闻，但求轻松点化寻常。他貌似简单的搭配几下，把我们“哄”进来。在细看之下，作品才慢慢的显露出它们的内在复杂性。他选择的材料依赖展览空间的语境来使之“脱胎换骨”；他模糊这些司空见惯的物品的边界，使得他们幽默，暧昧，多义，比简单意义上的“日常物品组合”更加复杂。

今年春天在广州美术馆开幕的由姜节泓策的《关系》群展里，他带来了一组陶瓷围棋棋盘。这十个棋盘排成一组，每个棋盘看上去像是被定格在某个下棋的过程中。经过高温烧制，黑白云子融在一起，形成一摊摊光亮的玻璃色块。围棋是中国古老的棋种，有两千多年历史：源源的流传下来很多高超的棋谱，均为传授如何达到防和守的平衡。展览以“关系”为题目，映射的是广义上的人情世故，世间关联互动的各种因素。对应于这个主题萧昱的围棋盘恰到好处的点评了那些围绕着权利和势力展开的精巧而慎密的行为。围棋，是一种比喻：人都要为自己落下的每一颗子，想占有的每个方格以及如何从那里更好的提升付出很多心思。不过这些精心的布局在萧昱的围棋里都被捣乱了：高温已把棋盘烧裂把棋子烧融，也把一个关于“控制”的游戏给烧糊了。这个作品是2011年春四个创作系列的一个开头，之后还有在其他个展和群展中出现的作品，这些新作都意在探究“权力体制”和“地位”这两个主题。

在北京的品画廊的里，萧昱展出的是他1987年艺术学院快毕业的时候画的画。通过把它们装裱在雕花的贴金箔画框里，他重新激活了这些以表现性人物为题材的旧作。和这些作品一起展览的还有用画框条层层相接而成的方形雕塑。这些雕塑从墙上往外突起，悬出来的形状有些是金字塔状，有些是倒金字塔状。这些由画框转化成的雕塑占据着理应挂画的墙面，由于雕塑的材料和那些旧画新配的画框都是一样招摇的镀金材料，它们之间形式上的对应引起的对话超越了传统看画的方式所能涵盖的。“装框”这个行为，无论是视觉上还是概念上都不断的介入看画人和画的关系。我们可以猜想，他选择用这样的方式呈现早期作品并不是让我们重新去游览他艺术生涯初始的模样，更多的是去构建情景，从而引起我们对方法论的注意：是哪些手法规定了艺术，是哪些途径使得艺术和其他物品和行为不同。

这类高调的雕花贴金箔画框很少用在当代艺术作品创作

Reordering the Familiar:

Four Recent Projects by XIAO Yu

Gordon Laurin Translated by HUANG Jingyuan

In XIAO Yu's recent work we see not so much the unique and rarefied, but rather the ordinary. His deceptively simple constructions tease us into viewing his works at close range, slowly revealing their internal complexity as we linger close. He relies on the gallery context to separate his familiar materials from their workaday environments, while instilling his recent projects with a playful ambiguity that complicates their initial appearance as assemblages of common objects.

For his contribution to the major group exhibition *Guang Xi*, curated by JIANG Jiehong this spring at the Guangdong Museum of Art, XIAO Yu produced a series of ceramic Go (*Weiqi*) boards presented in a long row. The ten games, all ostensibly in progress, have had their game stones melted through the firing process, with the black-and-white pieces reduced to glossy glass pools that flow together. Go, the ancient Chinese board game dating back more than 2,000 years, is known for complex strategies that require a balance of defensive and offensive play. As a response to the exhibition's theme of *guanxi*, the term for a broad set of social networks and relationships, XIAO Yu's Go game boards suggest a fitting commentary on the intricate moves for power and dominance in contemporary society. The game parallels the real life attention required to advance from and defend what one has laid claim to. But in the installation all this careful positioning is disrupted, the heat of the ceramic firing the event that has blurred this play for control. This installation is the first in a series of four solo and group exhibitions, all completed since the spring of 2011, where XIAO Yu examines the mechanisms of power and status.

For his current installation at the PIN gallery in Beijing, XIAO Yu reactivates a series of expressionistic figurative paintings, produced in 1987 during his last year at art school, by reframing the works in elaborate gilded frames. Presented alongside these paintings are square sculptures built with interlocked framing stock that create protruding and receding pyramid forms that cantilever off the wall. These frames-turned-sculptures engulf the centre areas that would normally present a painting. As the sculptural forms are created with the same materials that ostentatiously frame the paintings, they create a formal dialogue that supersedes what would have been a more conventional reading of the earlier works. The act of "framing" optically and symbolically interferes with our engagement with

里（除了在有些仿贵族风格的室内设计中）。回溯历史，这类风格画框在以前是用来衬托本身已有的崇高地位的作品。二十世纪在欧洲开始大规模的采用。慢慢的，在国家机构和教堂对十四世纪和十五世纪文艺复兴绘画的装裱定制中，这种风格被固定成一种正式选择。同时它也是一种把观众的注意力（凝望）引入到画面的方式。在现代主义框架下，尤其是在抽象主义领域，当时的审美主张消除和“再现”有关的表达通道，争取将艺术品直接放在观众眼前，所以哪怕是使用画框装裱，也只是看重其中的保护功能。而对萧昱而言，通过引入甚至是纵容这种大型（厚重而复杂的）画框，把“装框”提升到了创作内容和主题的高度。艺术作品不重要了，装框这个行为和实体则成了重点。在当代艺术批评语境中，艺术动机和艺术价值判定是一对复杂的关系体，这个装置从某种意义上实体化了这对复杂的关系体。在这里，画框是对“语境化艺术本体”现状的点评；是一种象征，代表不断改变的文化和社会标准，而正是这些标准影响和撞击着作品的认可体系。

类似的概念和手法也用在AYE画廊举办的《风景》展览里。通过叠加数根的重型长条画框，他把主展览空间的各面墙，地板和天花板从角到角的“框”了起来。框的是空白的画面，而空间和空间发生的看到的就成了作品的主题。除了画框和装框的手艺，艺术家不再给我们更多的信息。作品向我们提出了关于画框的功能的问题，这个开放性的问题在这也可以理解为画廊的身份以及更广泛的艺术体制在赋予艺术含义与价值的环节中的角色。很显然，这些金色的画框条带来的表现性和萧昱平时的风格相左，他用这样的选择构成一种略为艳俗的口吻来提醒我们对所有在场的因素的注意。这些极其专业而帅气的外观其实包装的是一个空无，这是一个形式精致却没有内容的容器。在欣赏这么一个有意追求内容上的“空无”的装置时，我们作为观看者是否感到自然？作品用这样的方式狡诘的督促我们去探究艺术界外表之下那些并不是时时都靠得住的体制。

这两个使用画框的装置项目均把“时间通道”这个概念考虑了进来。在品画廊的项目中，萧昱通过给旧作重新装框来引起我们对“时间跨度”的思考。这里的时间段是指从画完成到现在的展示（而这个展示中画作只是装置的部分元素）。装框这个行为，一般象征着一副作品完结的。他引用画框这种界定性的含义，似乎想告诉我们，急速发展的中国当代艺术造就了很多只是顾着光鲜和华美的外表的艺术创作；艺术就等同了最后一道上光料。在AYE画廊的“给房间装框”项目里，萧昱提供了一个舞台，观众在不知情中走入，而这个装置是由于时间的延展才得以完成。说到底，被框起来的是我们进入

the paintings. One would assume then that the choice of exhibiting his early student work in this manner has less to do with providing an opportunity to revisit his artistic beginnings, than using them within a narrative that draws attention to the means by which art is identified, separated from other objects or activities, and theoretically “framed.”

Elaborately gilded frames are rarely used on contemporary works, with the exception of those used in faux-elegant interior-design applications. Historically, such frames were used to reflect the high status of the work. The wider use of the carved frame in Europe developed during the twelfth century, becoming more formalized through commissions for the state and church in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century renaissance painting, and was used as a means to guide the viewer's gaze into the pictorial space. Modernism, particularly abstraction's agenda to eliminate the representative window and set the artwork within our directly lived space reduced the frame to little more than a protective edge, if one is used at all. In re-introducing the grand frame, and allowing it, as a wall sculpture, to consume the entire pictorial surface, XIAO Yu is elevating the “frame” above the subject. It is not the artistic creation, but the process of framing that is highlighted in these works. The installation gives concrete form to the complex relationship between artistic intention and the means by which art is assigned meaning and value within contemporary artistic discourse. The frame is used as a symbolic reference to changing societal and cultural values that impact the reception of the work, and a means to critique the process of contextualizing the art object.

A related strategy is taken up in his exhibition Scenery, at aye gallery, where the four walls, floor, and ceiling of the main exhibition room are transformed into empty paintings by running large framing stock along each corner. The resulting box of large-scale frames transforms the otherwise empty space into the subject of the work. With nothing to direct our attention to other than the fine craftsmanship of the framed room, the installation offers an open question about the function of framing, in this case to be understood as the roles of the gallery and the larger artistic infrastructure in assigning meaning and value. Clearly the excessiveness of the gold frames is antithetical to XIAO Yu's regular presentation of his work, and they are used here as a slightly garish reminder of the processes at work. The installation resonates with the crisp professional packaging of nothing, a finely formed container without content. I wonder if we, the audience, can be comfortable viewing an installation so intentionally empty of subject. The wily stance

的时间维度。作品在环绕在我们周围，让我们对自己的移动，休憩以及凝视等有更深的自觉。在一个从本质上追求艺术品的缺席的艺术空间里，我们的身体还有我们在空间停留的时间才是我们感知的对象。这两种关于时间的概念，一个是顺时的事件的延展，另一个是对当下的灵光一现似的感应，为我们理解这两个作品提供了完全不同的切入点。

权力之间的另一种关系成为作品《生物攻击的重量》的探索点，这个作品在798艺术区索卡画廊题为《微生活》的群展里面展出。这个雕塑装置是这样的：一个零售店里常常能看到的电子秤上面放着几个塞着猛犸象牙粉的避孕套。这几个挤成球茎状体的袋子很难让我联想到象牙，它们更多的暗示阴茎和乳房。作品引入这么一种“剩余物”，一种从珍奇的收藏者热衷的物件里“剩”出来的物质，就是想用一种特定而又毫无意义的方式来衡量“重量”。其实收藏，这种对稀有和新鲜的获取，这种常常要花大量财力的行为，有时候基于的是一套是似而非的判定。当然我们还可以有另外一个关联点，那就是象牙粉作为壮阳物的历史。在这个作品里，和珍贵的象牙雕同出一辙的物质被包裹成一个针对不洁用户有不洁用途的商品。避孕套是容器（包装），象牙粉是内容。两者皆柔滑可塑，又自有一套，毫不相让。他们在不停歇的内部矛盾和同谋中共生，他们塑造也被塑造，是变形的发起者也是变形的接受者。通过艺术家安排，避孕套成了大型陆地动物的身体残余的外皮，而象牙粉成了人类历史上把性和生殖隔离开的最常见工具的填充物。当它们和电子秤放在一起，那些盘踞在性体验里的各种幽灵，无论是关于欢愉，侵占还是冷漠，都被赋予了一个新的轮廓。这种并置讥笑着这么一个理念：世间一切均可度量，一切均可比较，最终一切均可做出评定，给出价格。

在《生物攻击的重量》作品旁边，是一个素色瓷碗，一双筷子从中“插肩”而过。这个最基本的日常饮食器皿被“动”了一下，消去了可用性。由于碗筷的连接的方式变了，这对碗筷不再具有吃饭这个用途。作品越是简洁就越凸显了问题的紧迫性：现在世界很大一部分人民还受着口粮问题的威胁。这对本身丝毫未损的碗筷似乎在暗示我：“现在不缺保证食物供给的硬件，缺的是有连贯性的重新分配的体制。”是的，构件都在，但是次序却是被破坏的：铁饭碗不见了，变成一只优雅，却不能使用的素瓷碗。

萧昱不被某一种审美所栓住，不追求表面意义上的艺术风格的延续性，让自己向更多的尝试的范畴敞开。在

pushed forward here challenges us to look below the veneer to the sometimes dubious mechanisms at work in the art-world.

In both installations XIAO Yu considers the passage of time. In the PIN gallery installation XIAO has “framed” his earlier paintings in a way that invites us to consider the period of time from their creation to their presentation as part of a new installation. In his use of framing stock, normally a material used to complete the presentation of an artwork, he seems to be suggesting that the rapid transformations in Chinese contemporary art have led to many artistic practices that have produced primarily fancy polished surfaces; art as finishing material. In the framed room at aye gallery, XIAO Yu plays with time by creating an installation that acts as a stage the viewer unwittingly enters. More than anything it is the duration of our visit that is being framed by the work. The work surrounds us, making us more aware of our movements, pauses, and gazes. In an art space essentially devoid of art, it is our bodies, and the period of time we spend in the room, that we gradually become more aware of. These two conceptions of time, the chronological unfolding of events and the momentary awareness of the present, establish the primary difference in the reading of the two installations.

It is an form of power relations that are highlighted in *The Weight of Creature's Attack* (2011) presented in the group exhibition *Micro Life* at the Soka gallery in the 798 Art District. The sculpture is comprised of a standard electric retail scale with condoms filled with mastodon tusk powder stacked on top. The bulbous sacks look to me vaguely like tusks, while carrying obvious phallic and breast connotations. The work incorporates the discarded waste from a rare and collected material, assigning a specific but meaningless measure of its weight. Collecting, the acquiring of the rare or novel, sometimes for extraordinary amounts of money, is here seen as based on a set of arbitrary values. The same precious material of the tusk carvings is repacked by the artist as an ambiguous consumer item of uncertain use. In the work, the condom acts as container and the tusk powder as content. Both flexible and stubborn, they cohabit in constant tension and agreement, acting as the receptor and the initiator of reshaping. Through his manipulation, the condom becomes the cover of the residue of a massive land animal, while the tusk powder fills the most common tool in helping humans to isolate sex from procreation. In this juxtaposition, the ghosts of sexual experience — pleasure, invasion, or indifference — take a new shape, and ironically con-

他作品的演化推进中，虽然跨越不同媒介和形式，一条主线贯穿他的创作：通过重新召回寻常之物，去推敲那些指挥公众行为的潜在建构。这些近期在不同艺术空间里展出的作品像是一幕幕剧场，上演着各种变体，它们不断重写着社会契约，小到艺术界里的，大到中国社会的。构成方式上，他们越来越精简，通过提炼赋予日常以新的层面和意义。他改变了关系点，创造了新的关系体，我们作为观众，如果想一路走来，就需要在对话中调整，在调整中对话。在他摆出的赤裸的并置中，每个人都可以从中“调整”出一个属于自己的故事。萧昱不属于那种在隔离的空间，深思冥想，探寻内在心理世界的工作室类型艺术家，他更多的是一个应变的主动参与者，从世界那里直接借用。这里的借用，不仅是对现成品而言，还指那些我们和物质世界的交换中养成的习惯。比如说，我们第一次看到《生物攻击的重量》时，反应大概和我们在水果店看到秤是一致的：我们的习惯让我们要想知道物体的重量。只有过了一会，当我们意识到这个精确的读数其实根本无法回答作品提出的问题的时候，我们才恍然。我个人相信我们在他的作品里常常体验到的这种紧张感，来自于对“如此亲近的日常”和“如此彻底的陌生”这两个极端的把握，使得两个极端如此活跃如此同时的在场。这些近作里涉及的权利体系，有些是关于粮食供给的，有些是关于对艺术的认可的，有些是关于性，有些是关于无处不在的“关系”意识的；它们同新思潮新姿态带来的活力相互呼应，向变数和改良敞开了大门。

test the idea that everything can be measured, compared, and eventually valued.

Mounted on the wall beside *The Weight of Creature's Attack* (2011) is a white ceramic bowl with a pair of chopsticks running through its side. The most basic culinary utensils are rendered unusable, the bowl and chopsticks are linked in a manner that makes eating impossible. The simplicity of the work makes only more immediate the challenges faced by a large segment of the population of the world to find basic sustenance. Having the bowl and chopsticks presented intact implies for me not a lack of proper tools to provide food, but rather the disjointed configuration of our food supply. Everything is in place but not ordered properly, the iron rice bowl replaced with an elegant, but useless white ceramic bowl.

Not tied to any specific artistic aesthetic, XIAO Yu has permitted himself wide latitude to experiment without concern for the appearance of artistic continuity. Yet while his work progresses through a diverse range of mediums and forms, often reordering the common, a consistent thread can be found in his continuing commitment to examine the underlining constructs that direct our public actions. The works showcased in these recent exhibitions create a theatrical staging of the transformations that are reshaping the social contract, both in the art-world and in Chinese society in general. The work is increasingly simple in method, a process of distillation is used where the familiar is given new dimension and meaning. We are asked to negotiate through the altered relationships he constructs, creating individual narratives drawn out of the stark juxtapositions present. XIAO Yu is less involved in isolated and introspective studio ruminations than he is in an immediate engagement with world around him from which he borrows directly. Borrowing not only found objects, but as well, patterns of our regular exchange with the material world. Our initial response to *The Weight of Creature's Attack* is as it would be at any fruit stand: we need to see the weight of the object. Only afterwards do we realize how little this precise measurement does to solve the question the works seems to be posing. I believe much of the tension, so common to our experience of his work, comes from the play between the immediately familiar and entirely foreign that are so often simultaneously present. His recent projects on the systems of power that direct our food supply, reception of art, sexuality, and the pervasive social influence of *guanxi*, resonate with the vitality of new ideas and positions open to change and modification; his work proposes a series of irony-laced propositions offered up for contemplation.