



STRAIT IS THE GATE

窄門

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Strait is the Gate**Text: Véronic-Ting Chen****"Strive to enter in at the strait gate..."****– Luke 13:24***About Desire*

Desire is not as complex and beyond understanding as it might seem. It does not entail neither Lack nor Castration. André Gide, from the same era as Sigmund Freud, had attempted at telling us that, the completion of desire is not the satisfaction after orgasm, and at the same time it does not cling to anything, but in the contrary, the pleasure of reaching orgasm has in essence, the same characteristics as death – they terminate the process of desire. As Alissa prays, "Oh, Lord! Preserve me from a happiness to which I might too easily attain! Teach me to put off my happiness, to place it as far away from me as Thou art."

In *Strait is the Gate*, whenever Jerome attempts to get close to Alissa, she would do anything to push him away, reject him, time and time again. She loves him, and yet she pursues virtue without ends, at times her adherence is shaken, though nothing could become the hindrance to her desires, even if it is a mere moment of pleasure.

The problem here being that the gate of virtue is too narrow for two people, too narrow for love, and too narrow for two people in love. Alissa so deliriously desires that even though she loves Jarome, this love between them has become, in her mind, his impediment to virtue. She rejects him, time and time again, and yet this is the way in which she expresses love, because this is the only way he would enter the strait gate. What Alissa longs for, is not the strait gate itself, but the process of getting through the gate - it is the striving in "strive to enter in at the strait gate".

If either the strait gate of virtue or Jarome's love were no more, Alissa's desire would still stand. This is because it is not that we desire "something", but that our desires and what we desire are ultimately a situation, a process, in which overall, something becomes the object of desire.

About Repetition

We repeat, because they led us to believe that repetition is the only way of expressing desire, making us believe that desire itself is repetition – as we repeat the first orgasm, the first completion, the first sense of existence... or it is the lingering love for something... Endlessly longing for some “thing”, whereby gaining a sense of satisfaction from it – we stare at the television, waiting for the repeating faces, image, words and intersecting emotions... How could our desire be merely so? Or rather, in the contemporary life, full of “interceptors”, the flowing desires of ours, endlessly divided, seized, intercepted, reversed, absorbed, dissipated... like our firsts, time and time again intercepting our second, third and x-th... we might even attach to our “selves”, like the self in the society, intercepting its other possibilities repeatedly.

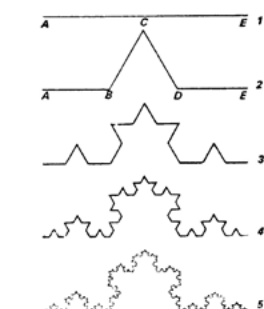
Similarly, work repeats itself, as the artist repeats himself, and the exhibition repeats itself as the spectators repeat themselves. This exhibition cannot be separated from repetition – a choir of the looping happy birthday song, (where the birthday song is in itself, a repetition, as birthdays are); a “signal” played repeatedly, like the ray of light that scans across the wall over and over again; like the fireworks that repeat themselves, like the repeating LOVE, as though it were mourning endlessly, as though repeating in the same language...

Familiarity, similarity.

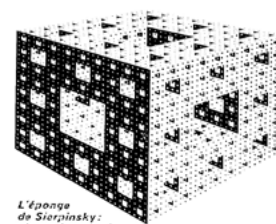
“Why repeat?” is not the question raised here, but rather, “what kind of process is it that we are trying to construct? What is it as a whole? Is it that in this state, repetition has become a necessity?”

About Difference

The following image is of the Von Koch curve and the Sierpinsky cube: the Von Koch curve is “higher than a one-dimensional line, but lower than a two-dimensional surface”, in which the center of each straight line, an equilateral triangle rises, where $AB=BC=CD=DE$, after endless repetition, lines expand into a plane, where we would reach the border between the one-dimensional line and the two-dimensional surface. Similarly the Sierpinsky cube depicts “higher than a two-dimensional surface but lower than a three-dimensional volume”, in which each sides of a cube is repeatedly divided into three's with the center of each section hollowed, the volume detracts towards a plane, where we would reach the border between surface area and volume.



La courbe de Von Koch: plus qu'une ligne, moins qu'une surface! Le segment AE (1) est amputé de son deuxième tiers lequel est remplacé par le triangle BCD (2). En (3), on répète cette opération sur chacun des segments AB, BC, CD et DE séparément. Ce qui donne un tracé anguleux dont tous les segments sont égaux. Sur chacun de ces segments on répète une troisième fois (4) ce qui a été fait en (2) et (3), et ainsi de suite, à l'infini. On obtient à la limite une « courbe » faite d'un nombre infini de points anguleux et qui n'admet pas de tangente en aucun de ses points. La longueur de cette courbe est infinie et sa dimension est supérieure à un: elle représente un espace de dimension 1,261 859 (exactement $\log 4/\log 3$).



L'éponge de Sierpinsky: plus qu'une surface, moins qu'un volume! La loi d'évidement de ce cube est intuitive, au simple coup d'œil: chaque trou carré est entouré de huit trous au tiers de sa dimension: ces huit trous sont eux-mêmes entourés de huit trous encore au tiers. Et ainsi de suite, indéfiniment. Le dessinateur n'a pu représenter l'infinité de trous de plus en plus minuscules au-delà du quatrième ordre, mais il est bien évident que ce cube est finalement infiniment creux, son volume total tend vers zéro alors que la surface totale latérale des évidements croît à l'infini. La dimension de cet « espace » est 2,726 8. Il est donc « compris » entre une surface (de dimension 2) et un volume (de dimension 3). Le « tapis de Sierpinsky » est l'une des faces de ce cube, les évidements étant alors des carrés et la dimension de cette « surface » est 1,261 8. (Reproduit de *Studies in Geometry*, de Leonard Blumenthal and Karl Hoyer, Freeman and Company, 1970).

A propos des « objets fractals » de B. Mandelbrot

Three assumptions are presented here. Firstly, that repetition is a way in acquiring difference; secondly, repetition is always, a repetition in the becoming; and lastly, the infinitely closing gap between the two states that is in itself, repeating and differentiating (lines repeats surfaces, volume repeats surface).

Why is it that at that moment and place, where we strive to separate desire from repetition, that desires races? And yet at the same place and time, while intersecting repetition with difference, making “one” the bordering line, making it “more”? Or perhaps, while returning to the subjectivity of consciousness, regaining the subjectivity of the self has become another functionality of contemporary art?

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Installation View







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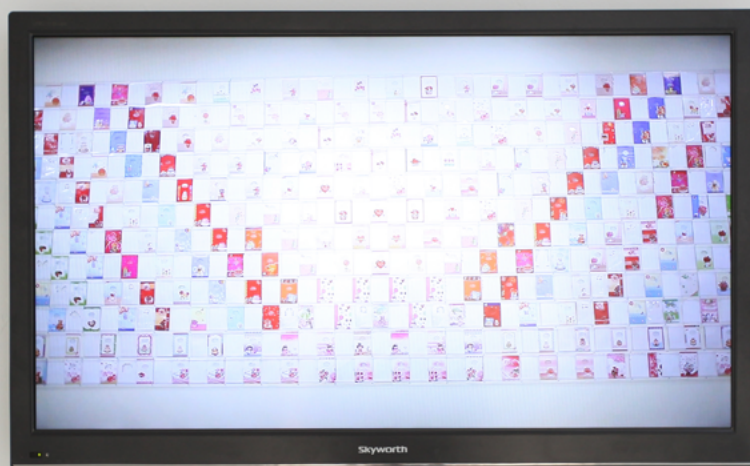


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Art Works



The Light of Transience NO.2, Video, 5'37", 2012



Voice, Video, 8'22", 2012





Jiang Zhi uses battery operated birthday cards in his new installation "Voice", when it was first exhibited, the cheaply made electronic birthday song is being repeatedly played in the five rows of cards, forming a spectacular and interesting arrangement that resembles a choir. The batteries in the cards die as time passes, and the volume of the cards becomes increasing uneven, until it reaches utter silence. However, the artist has not exhibited the installation in Magician Space, but a video that depicts the process, though either the video or the installation could be the entirety of "Voice".



The Quiet Bodies, Installation, Spent fireworks casing, Demension Variable, 2011-2012



The Quiet Bodies, detail

About the Artist

Jiang Zhi (b.1971, Yuanjiang City, Hunan Province) is a Beijing-based artist who graduated from the China Academy of Art in 1995. After participating in the 'Post-Sense Sensibility' exhibitions in the 1990s, Jiang Zhi has subsequently proceeded to become one of the most influential Chinese artists of his generation. He works with a wide range of mediums that span video, painting, photography, installation, poetry and writing novels. He was awarded the academic achievement of Reshaping History (Chinart from 2000-2009) in 2010, the Asian New Force IFVA Critics Award in 2002, and was also awarded the Chinese Contemporary Art Award (CCAA) in 2000.

Major solo exhibitions include: *Can I Become Better?*, Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong (2020); *Hypocenter*, Zurich, CN (2019); *Already I Know the Storms*, Magician Space, Beijing, CN (2018); *Going and Coming*, Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong, CN (2018); *To Make with Changes*, HdM Gallery, Beijing, CN (2017); *One is All, All is One*, Tina Keng Gallery, Taipei, CN (2017); *Predestiny*, Magician Space, Beijing, CN (2016); *The Sight*, White Cube, Hong Kong, CN (2015); *Strait is the Gate*, Magician Space, Beijing, CN (2012); *If This is a Man*, Times Museum, Guangzhou, CN (2012).

Major group exhibitions include: *Noire Lumière*, How Art Museum, Shanghai, CN (2020); *Questioning Power*, Osage Hong Kong, Hong Kong, CN (2020); *Resort*, Three on the Bund, Shanghai, CN (2020); *The 4th Today's Documents: A Stitch in Time*, Beijing Times Art Museum, Beijing, CN (2019); *Ordinary Lie*, Seoul Museum, Seoul, KR (2019); *On Paper 2*, White Space, Beijing, CN (2018); *Fiction Art*, OCAT Shenzhen, Shenzhen, CN (2018); *Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture: City Grow Difference*, Shenzhen, CN (2017); *Art and China After 1989: Theatre of the World*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, US (2017); *The Exhibition of Annual of Contemporary Art of China 2016*, Beijing Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing, CN (2016); *That Has Been, and May Be Again*, Para Site, Hong Kong (2016); *The 9th Shanghai Biennale 2012 – Reactivation*, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, CN (2012); *The 4th Guangzhou Triennial – The Unseen*, Guangdong Art Museum, Guangzhou, Guangdong, CN (2012); *Time Versus Fashion*, Kunstverein Nürtingen, Germany (2009); *Between Past and Future: New Photography and Video from China*, ICP and Asia Society, New York, USA (2004); *The 50th Biennale di Venezia*, Venice, ITA (2003); *The 4th Gwangju Biennale Exhibition*, Gwangju, KR (2002); *Post-Sense Sensibility: Alien Bodies & Delusion*, Beijing, CN (1999).

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