

Li Ran

MONT SAINTE-VICTOIRE

李然个展 圣维克多尔山

2012.02.25 - 2012.03.25

开幕 Opening: 2012.02.25 15:30

表演 Performance: 16:00 - 17:30

MAGICIAN SPACE

魔金石空间

圣维克多尔山

李然个展

魔金石空间将于 2012 年 2 月 25 日下午 3:30 为大家带来李然个展《圣维克多尔山》。

“圣维克多尔”是座落在法国南部的一座山。在艺术家保罗·塞尚的画室可以望见整座山，他一生为此山画过几十幅作品。李然个展取用这座山的名字作为展览题目，试图自我建造一条通往现代主义美学的通道，再次观看消沉于我们自身历史之中的经验碎片。艺术家自我编纂了四个剧目的陈述，分别为“反射的图景”、“凝视”、“竞技”、“偶遇”，并以模仿 70、80 年代中文译制片配音的方式进行现场表演。

基尔凯廓尔：“重复和重拾是相同的行为，只不过方向相反：重拾是向后的重复，而真正的重复是向前的重拾。”

关于艺术家

李然 1986年出生于湖北，目前工作生活在北京。2009年获四川美术学院油画系，获学士学位，他是“公司 /Company”项目的发起人与参与者。在他的作品中，他通过模仿者的角色出现，将自己寄付给偶遇、身体经验。他一次次化身为各种角色和事件，在检验自我边界的同时，也向艺术本身的虚拟性提出自己的角度。

李然的作品曾在休斯顿当代美术馆，深圳 oct 当代艺术中心，中央美术学院美术馆等机构展览。他也曾参加过第九届光州双年展，第七届深圳雕塑双年展。李然曾在北京魔金石空间，上海艾可画廊举办过个展 (2012)。他也曾参加过纽约 Meulenstein 画廊、北京站台中国艺术机构等画廊举办的群展。



圣维克多尔山 (录像截屏)

2012

录像部分

数码高清, 彩色 / 有声

34分36秒



圣维克多尔山 (录像截屏)
2012
录像部分
数码高清, 彩色 / 有声
34分36秒



圣维克多尔山 (录像截屏)
2012
录像部分
数码高清, 彩色 / 有声
34 分 36 秒



展览现场







today we recall, look back upon





媒体报道

多姆斯收藏精选 “808”

专栏 / 张明会客室 / 时尚芭莎 2013 年 1 月刊

芭莎
艺术云街

2
周年纪念刊

中国第一本国际化艺术杂志

A 张明会客室 | RICHARD CHANG'S MEETING ROOM

多姆斯收藏精选 “808”

总是适合回顾与展望。对于中国和西方最前沿的当代艺术都持续密切关注的多姆斯收藏，一心期盼能为中国当代艺术发声，因此跟画廊、策展人、艺术家保持各种交流。最近，一群年轻，但是观念与作品都强而有劲的艺术家，在他们的事业，在机构、美术馆、藏家与画廊的铺垫下已稳步成型。黄然、李姝睿、赵要、李然、何翔宇、马秋莎、胡向前、孙逊这群年轻“80后”艺术家（排名不分先后），多姆斯收藏将分上下两期专栏，逐一介绍这些冉冉上升的新星。

The year-end is coming. It is always a good timing for retrospect and prospect. The Domus Collection continues to pay close attention to the forefront of Chinese and Western contemporary art, looks forward to promote Chinese contemporary art with galleries, curators, artists. Recently, a group of young and dynamic artists are steadily molding the future of Chinese contemporary art whom are already recognized by important institutions, galleries and collectors. These rising stars are Li Shurui Li, Zhao Yao, Li Ran, He Xiangyu, Ma Qiusha, Hu Xiangqian, Sun Xun. They will be introduced in the next two issues.

【编辑/冯品敏】文、译/吴羽【图/多姆斯收藏】

“80后”，这群独生子女政策与改革开放文化环境下一代人，他们上美院之后，学院专业的背景为他们提供一种技术方法与思考方式的训练，但是相对于专注单一的技法，他们更倾向于根据自己的创作理念运用不同的媒介。这种广泛不受限制的探索，表现在自由、创新的创作形式，而且，无论他们用什么媒介表达，他们最经常发表的主题可粗略分成三种：“自我氛围与疗愈”、“宏大叙事与个人经验探索”与“以卡通图像讨论个人与外在经验”。



李然《地理之外》，影像装置，2012，23'09" 图片来源：多姆斯收藏。（此图为翻照）。



A
艺术家介绍

李然
LI RAN

出生年：1986
出生地：湖北
就读学校：
四川美术学院油画系毕业
工作室：北京
同时也属于一个无项目而组织的“公理/Company”艺术家组合，成员除了他，还有那曜、陈翰和李明。

李然

李然出生在一个艺术家庭。他的父亲也是个艺术家。儿时，李然一度厌食，父亲为了劝诱他到饭桌上乖乖吃饭，就给他讲一个艺术史的故事，譬如米开朗基罗的鼻子被人打断等等。这些有意思的段子，绵密而细致地织在李然的记忆里，父亲对艺术史的忠诚，早早开启他对于艺术史的兴趣，上美术高中与四川美院之后，对于史料的研究与思辨，再自然而然地成为他后来创作的重要线索。

最佳证明是李然2012年在北京魔金石空间展的作品《圣维克多尔山》。几架幻灯机，在画廊墙壁上投影名画和历史图片，这个现场的行为演出，艺术家扮成一名配音员，读着自己撰写的关于艺术的剧本。哲学家、收藏家、艺术家、批评家等等，都是李然用声音扮演的角色，而作品内容指涉的是塞尚与现代主义思潮。显然，李然研究过塞尚的个人史。圣维克多尔山是塞尚反复在画的一座山，从他的工作室望出去，山就在眼前。塞尚仿佛也

知道自己的局限，反复地画，那是自我进步的实践。

通过塞尚，李然的思绪和现代主义有不可磨灭的关系。这让他更自信地直视自己的环境、自己的能力和自己。在上海艾可画廊展的作品《地理之外》也是一套他对艺术史的回溯。2012年的另一件作品，《从卡车司机到骑兵政委》，李然模仿前苏联电影《一个人的遭遇》主角的人生。透过这部电影，他悟出艺术行业里的政治性。“电影本身其实对我没有重大意义。但是‘遭遇’这个词汇勾起我的一些想法。电影里的人被动参与了政治性。”李然说的其实是普通艺术家人生经历中往往被动地卷入不明黑里的关系中，被赋予了政治性的角色。

这些超龄的思考，通过他自己本人的精湛演绎，结合在各种范畴中模仿、挪用找尋艺术或者人文的讽刺题材，呈现出来的作品给人清爽有趣之感，这使他，在“808”名单中最年轻的艺术家，不容小觑的原因。

李然个展：圣维克多尔山

文 / 何持如 / Art Time 艺术时代

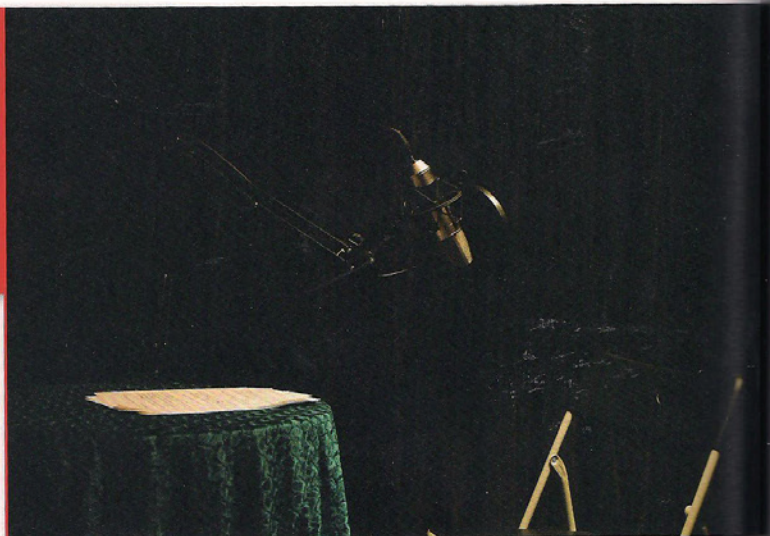
李然个展 《圣维克多尔山》

Li Ran
Mont Sainte-victoir

展览时间
2012年2月25日-3月25日

展览地点
魔金石空间(北京)

文/何持如
图/Ophelia



李然个展《圣维克多尔山》现场

展览是一出不断切换的历史图像背景和角度固定的当下人物主体分离并置又互相斗争互相联系的荒诞剧。幻灯放映机机械的咔嚓声简直是保罗·塞尚们显得呆板单调却仍然极富限制性侵略性的形象的化身,和表演者(作者)模仿1970、80年代中文译制片配音的喋喋不休节奏丰富的悦耳噪音一起,有一种诡异的说教气息。

《圣维克多尔山》是否是一件关于模仿的作品?展览名称“圣维克多尔山”本来就是一个模仿行为产生的汉语。而作品中各种重重叠叠环环相扣相生相克的模仿,既是《圣维克多尔山》的形式语言,也是《圣维克多尔山》的题材内容。李然既是在表演模仿,也是在模仿表演。模仿既是艺术家奉献自我的祭礼,也是艺术家驱除魔咒的仪式。

不管是师造化还是师古人,不管是被动地还是主动地,模仿是人生最初采取的行为,并且始终塑造着我们的身体。我们的身体是在模仿中被劫持了。为往圣继绝学的责任,首先担负在我们的身体上。历史记忆一直潜伏存活延续在我们的身体里,美学积累也一样。身体

是历史的通道,也是美学的巢穴。我们总是被历史的幽灵附体,代美学的僵尸发声。声音是他者的声音,身体是他者的身体。不要问我们在哪里,或者哪里才是我们,只要有身体,历史就不会终结。

没有哪种语言比身体语言有更强的表达力,没有什么其他材料比身体材料能透露出更多的信息,哪怕是处于表演状态下的虚假的被借用的他者的身体。

给表演行为一个矩形的框,把表演行为固定化单调化平面化图像化符号化,是对摄像机的顺从和反转。观众不是论文答辩的导师,就是旁听答辩的学生,或是潜在的爱慕者,都是需要被反转的视角固定的摄像机。

《圣维克多尔山》是年轻艺术家的热情、雄心、洞察力、克制、技能和愿望的展示。也展示了年轻一代中的佼佼者对自己身体中的焦虑、紧张、不安、盲目、眩晕和着迷在持续开发的同时进行理性关照的努力。



李然个展《圣维克多尔山》开幕表演剧照

李然：圣维克多尔山

文 / 戴伟平 / Leep 艺术界 2012 年四月刊



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198李然：圣维克多尔山
LI RAN: MONT SAINTE-VICTOIRE

北京魔金石空间 MAGICIAN SPACE, BEIJING 2012.02.25-2012.03.25



《圣维克多尔山》，2012年，现场表演

Mont Sainte-Victoire, 2012, live performance

过去几年中，表演艺术在国际范围内复苏，同时在国内，重新燃起了对于理论文本（尤其是国外译著）的热情，而李然的个展集中体现了这两种动向。展览以嘉尚同名的绘画题材“圣维克多尔山”为题，其重要组成部分包括开幕时的现场表演。

现场表演的场所与展厅一壁之隔，观众只能从墙上的窗口窥看表演。狭小的墙后空间仅能容纳一张圆桌和一把椅子，圆桌上铺的桌布与充当背景的暗红丝绒幕布质地相同，色调互成对比，占据观看中心点的是一个略显夸张的电容麦克风。身着一身灰西服的表演者跷腿斜坐在桌旁，油亮的大背头以及从眼镜架上垂下的金色挂链显得十分刺眼，故意暴露

出一个冒充者的破绽。表演时，艺术家手持剧本，以译制片配音的方式模仿不同人物的腔调朗读剧本，中间伴随着情绪化的小动作和细微的表情变化。

此前，李然更多的是以一个称为“公司”的艺术项目的成员身份出现在公众面前，在他的首次个展“圣维克多尔山”中，仍可见到“公司”一贯关心的话题，如艺术家的实践状态、艺术史和艺术体制的压力，还有反现代主义的态度等等，这些都在李然自己撰写的剧本章节里有所体现。

表演分四幕，剧本充斥着来自各类中文译著的选段，这些译文节选往往具有强烈的戏剧性，因此这些段落拼贴在一起便能自动生成新的戏剧语境，例

如，米歇尔·福柯的《疯癫与文明》中关于心理治疗的引文段落出现在第三幕，罗兰·巴特的《文之悦》中的一段出现在第二幕，它们增强了表演的戏剧性，但是一联想到国外理论著作经常在翻译过程中由于修饰过度而偏离原文的翻译灾难时，这种译文的戏剧性就包含了一种具有现实意味的嘲讽。事实上，使用译制片中文配音的表演方式本身就具有讽刺性，因为相比于这种伪装外国人发音的配音译制片，人们更欢迎原声电影。但是，讽刺却远非李然这个展览的首要目标，尽管在艺术家设置的散漫的意义支点和不断重复的“假动作”中，观众常常会迷失了方向。尤其是后两幕“竞技”和“偶遇”，焦点似乎从艺术问题滑向了对于人性维度的文学化表述，从而反衬出李然通过“反射的图景”与“凝视”前两幕所埋下的伏笔——从虚无的背景中闪现出对精神体验的渴求。

在现场表演结束的同时，一个与表演窗口等大的记录了整个表演的投影画面出现在了对面展墙上，此时作为表演艺术要素之一的“表演者的在场”显然与“表演者在媒介中的在场”出现了重复，从而削弱了现场表演的必要性。与表演相比，此时这个记录表演过程的影像与展厅内另外三台不停播放着艺术史图片集合的投影装置之间的关联，反而显得更为直观。戴伟平

In the past couple of years, performance art has seen a resurgence in popularity on the international art scene, at the same time igniting in China renewed enthusiasm for theoretical writings, especially translated texts. Li Ran's recent solo exhibition stands at the crossroads of these two trends. The exhibition's title is directly borrowed from Cézanne's famous series of paintings, "Le Mont Saint-Victoire." Its content, however, is a combination of performance and video installation.

The exhibition's key performance happened on opening night. Inside the gallery, a wall separated the performance space from viewers. Through a hole in the wall, audience members could peer into a narrow space barely large enough for the props: one small round table covered with a green velvet tablecloth, one chair, and hanging behind it all, dark red velvet curtains. The viewer's line of vision, however, fell on an exaggeratedly large condenser microphone. The artist sat cross-legged at the table, his shiny hair combed back and his gold eye-glass chain out of place next to his gray suit, as if purposefully exposing an impostor's defects. During the performance, the artist read from the script in his hand like a voiceover actor, using different voices for difference parts and altering his gestures and inflections according to changes in the texts.

Prior to this exhibition, Li Ran most often appeared in public as a member of the "Company" collective. In "Mont Sainte-Victoire," which is also Li's first solo exhibition, topics previously explored by "Company" are also present, such as the methods of an artist's practice, art history and institutional pressure, anti-modernist attitudes, and more. All of these are expressed via the script that Li himself wrote, and which he reads during the performance.

The performance, later exhibited on video, takes place over four acts. Interspersed within the script are carefully chosen excerpts from translated theoretical works, which when pieced together create a new dramatic context for the performance. For example, selections from Roland Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text* are included in act two; and a passage about psychiatry from Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* appears in act three. When thoughts turn to accuracy of the translations, however, one is reminded of subpar efforts that err on the side of style over content, and the performance's inclusion of these borrowed words thus carry a whiff of ridicule. This, while choosing to perform as a voiceover actor is already stiffly ironic; audiences prefer to watch films with the original actors' voices, not second-hand imitations.

But mockery and ridicule are not the goals of Li Ran's exhibition, even though the artist's roaming reference points and insistence on faking out the viewer can lead to confusion. During the last two acts, titled "Tournament" and "Chance Encounter," the focus shifts from questions about art to literary representations of the dimensions of humanity. This transition is foreshadowed in the first two acts, "Reflected View" and "Gaze." The overall effect that emerges from a seemingly empty background are flashes of human yearning for spiritual connections.

At the performance's end, a video recording of what just took place is projected onto the opposite gallery wall. The size of the video image is the same as the opening through which the audience watched everything unfold. In this moment, the performer and his performance have doubled their presence in the gallery; the performer is present at the same time as the performance, which is represented through the medium of video. Suddenly the live performance does not seem so necessary. Posed against the other three projections—showing slides of images from the history of art—this video of the performance seems more appropriately in dialogue with the setup than the performance itself. Dai Weiping (Translated by JiaJing Liu)

李然：自我意淫

译 / 康康 /leep 艺术界 2012 年十月刊



《地理之外》
2012年
高清彩色有声录像
装置
尺寸可变
Beyond
Geography
2012
Color, sound, HD
video
Dimensions variable

年轻艺术家李然(1983年生)擅于滔滔不绝的描述自己艺术创作中的每一个方面,这并不令人惊讶——最近两年,李然在视频创作中愈发依赖于语言和文本的对照。他使用建筑语言描述自己的艺术创作:一件作品就像一个房间,它既不应向观众关闭大门,也不该将他们逼入单一化阐释的死角;同样,这扇门不该永远敞开,也不能随便什么人都可到此一游。它应该处在一种深思熟虑后恰到好处地半开半掩状态,观者可以自由进出,但并非没有阻力。这样的比喻似乎相当适合艺术家在现实中

探索非现实的实践。

这种探索首先出现在李然33分钟长的视频作品《圣维克多尔山》中。视频以艺术家2011年在蓝宝石空间的表演为基础,充斥着毫无逻辑、分支不断的多人对话,所有的角色都由坐在麦克风前戴着眼镜的穿越版李然饰演。从整体来讲,如果李然的艺术是一个巨大的房间,作品中出现的观念和话语——比如“这是一个可以不断异化而非创造的世界,一个可以停留在蔬菜瓜果之间互相置换的世界”或“它不是梦,而是我们才是别人梦中的客体”——

audience or corner them into forced, unilateral interpretation. Nor should the door remain completely open, the room easily probed “like a whore.” Rather, it should remain considerably and pensively half-open, allowing viewers to enter and exit its domain at their will but not without resistance. This virtual-minded analogy is fitting inasmuch as Li’s practice increasingly hinges on the exploration of the non-reality within reality.

This exploration was first revealed in Li Ran’s long and lumbering *Mont Saint-Victoire*. Based on a performance given at the opening of his 2011 solo exhibition at Magician Space in Beijing, the 33-minute video stumbles throughout a seemingly illogical, furcated dialogue between a number of imagined characters, all meticulously impersonated by a bespectacled, throwback Li seated before a microphone. On the whole, the phrases and concepts articulated therein—from “This is a constantly alienating, non-fictional world within a contradicting argument, a world that could remain in the transposition between vegetables and fruits” to “It isn’t a dream, but we are the objects inside someone else’s dream”—weave together to construct an anteroom to the great chamber that

is his Art, intimidating in the isolation they affect in the viewer. In detail, however, each carefully constructed phrase can be seen as an indicative confession, and thus may serve as a key to opening the door beyond—and furthermore, to maneuvering the intellectual architecture within. But just how real is that intellectual architecture?

Li Ran’s affinity for imitation functions as an initial blueprint of this dubious artistic framework, loudly superimposed over form and content. In *Mont Saint-Victoire* alone, the personalities of dozens of different characters he adopts, from the withered meekness of an old man and the husky righteousness of a left wing youth to an aged rapist and his victim, are all filtered through the splendid exaggeration of voiceover film actors from 1970s and 80s China. For viewers (listeners) familiar with the soundscapes of the scant imported films and television series of the time, Li’s imitations are inevitable invitations to close one’s eyes and contextualize each character within one’s own personal perceptual histories. Together with the dialogue’s intentional rhetorical failures, this induction of a constructed reality from the past (film and television) into another constructed reality (the video, which itself

《圣维克多尔山》, 2012年, 现场表演
Mont Saint-Victoire, 2012, live performance



THE YOUNG ARTIST Li Ran (born 1983) is able to eloquently delineate nearly every facet of his burgeoning artistic practice. This should come as no surprise: in the last two years, his work, through the lens of video, has come to hinge almost entirely on the spoken word and the collation of written text. Li’s most basic account of his art employs the language of architecture: an artwork is a room, a room that should not shut the door on its

便是房间的前厅，它通过孤立观者制造恐惧。在细节层面上，每个精心打造的句子都像一声自白，一把打开更多门，在艺术家建造的智性建筑中游离的钥匙。

李然对模仿的偏爱超越了形式和内容，成为他创作框架的最初蓝图。在《圣维克多尔山》中，他化身为数十个性情迥异的角色——从哀哀温顺的老人、自以为正义的左翼青年到了年纪的强奸犯和他的受害者，所有角色都通过七八十年代译制片的夸张配音表现。熟悉那个年代寥寥无几的进口影视片的观众（或听众）会情不自禁地在艺术家的模仿中闭上眼睛，将这些角色置于个人感知经验之中。对话中有意为之的翻译错误将一种建构出的现实（影视作品）转为另一种建构现实（视频作品），是典型的现代主义手法：在艺术及艺术作品中人为制造裂隙，这也是李然创作的主要驱动力。

至少，李然提醒我们，现代主义的永恒信条是当代艺术尚未完成的使命。在他看来，伪装并不能掩盖当代艺术不能充分意识到自己的历史地位和权利的事实。在艺术家一夜之间就跃升入艺术史的中国，这样的怀疑显得格外有力。虽然这些编年史并未严肃对待现代主义的中心命题。

在新作《地理之外》中，模仿被戏剧化为纯粹的戏仿。李然从头到脚穿着探索频道外景主持的典型服装，踏上野蛮原始

丛林中寻找神秘部落的旅程。艺术家像主持人一样详细解说路上的每一步，虽然观者无法辨别其中的词句，但他的声音像中国观众耳熟能详的探索节目经典配音，效果令人捧腹。他喝河水中水，貌似专业的点评珍稀植物，因为黑夜中的可怕声响而尖叫甚至尖叫，但这一切都是在一个空空荡荡的摄影棚中发生的，房间里只有他“发现”的原始人荒诞可笑的脸。当李然终于接受新朋友们的身体彩绘时，观者也会发现这场向想象世界进军的滑稽旅程与我们对人类创造力的理解一样落后。视频结尾处，李然将原始人（不可见）的洞穴壁画与毕加索和蒙德里安相提并论，完成了他的戏仿：艺术家是今日的傲慢主角，而洞穴人成为艺术家，但今日的艺术真的超越了原始部落的壁画吗？

艺术家对所见之物的表现与所思、所想、所预测一样复杂。他2012年的个展同名视频《漂亮的知识》同样强调了这一现实。在这次的戏仿中，李然伪造了一封病毒邮件，假扮成一位法国先知，在1980年预测未来32年发生的事：有了Final Cut Pro一类软件，伪装旧录像并不是难事。他的预言事无巨细（只有诺查丹玛斯能做到），似乎无所不知，但他说的法语根本不像法语，没人能听得懂。这些废话中的幽默由于外语音的缺失而凸显出来，它们的全部意义都来自于字幕——文字自然

是创造力最可靠的工具。当观众意识到先知在预测未来而李然在重述过去时，二者都变得可疑起来。同一展览中的四幅绘画《之前-之后》使用了威廉·贺加斯1736年同名画作中的内容，比如精致的大衣、酒吧女侍的裙子和雪白的大腿——以构拜后现代的方式嫁接了前现代语境中的有趣细节，结果自然不会是“漂亮的”。

这些作品只是李然充满裂隙的艺术世界的一角。回到《圣维克多尔山》，我们发现一种对话在作品中形成，但想要辨明时又变得模糊。对于作家、画家、讽刺者和怀疑论者李然来说，艺术世界或许不过如此，充满了无意义的装腔作势。让我们回顾“骄傲的中年人”的建议吧：“大可不必延伸这晦涩的哲学论述，回到艺术中，我们所观看的是在体系和世界结构定义之外的，虽然可以被串联和归类，但是这种愚钝的划分，这种书写背后藏着多么单一而乏味、夹杂着迫切而虚妄的幻想，而这种幻想其实是在自我意淫。”（由康康翻译）

“漂亮的知识”——李然个展
艾可画廊·上海
2012年9月5日-10月15日

reproduction of yet another real-
is Modernism par excellence. It is
the artwork, and thus of art itself—a
force of Li's practice.

Or, at the very least, Li Ran aims
to remind us of one of contemporary
art's incomplete tasks: the everlasting
quests of Modernism. It would seem
as in his eyes, contemporary art fails
to achieve full consciousness of its his-
torical place and right, no matter how
much it feigns such awareness. His sus-
picion is particularly relevant in China,
where artists have rushed to catapult
themselves ahead in the annals of art
history—even if these annals, amidst
the foil and folly of other histories,
never had the chance to sincerely ad-
dress what Modernism means to.

In one of Li Ran's newer works,
Beyond Geography, this issue is more
frankly addressed, as the artist drama-
tizes his role as imitator to the point
of sheer parody. Head to toe in the
garb of the typical Discovery Channel
adventurer-explorer, the artist dashes
nervously through the uncharted jungle
habitat of a primitive tribe. While on
his search for this mysterious society
of hunter-gatherers—narrating every
step of the way, like any good host,

although here in a completely unintel-
ligible language masked by, again, Li's
own voice in laughably accurate mim-
icry of the dubbed Discovery Channel
protagonist familiar to Chinese ears—he
daringly gulps fresh water from a
river, expertly admires exotic vegeta-
tion, and whimpers in fear of the dark
sounds of the night (screaming, even,
as he trips on a human skull). Yet all
this takes place in an empty, bare-
blue television studio, with nothing for
the eye to actually behold except the
ridiculous visages of the savage tribes-
men when Li “discovers” them. As Li
ritually accepts the traditional warpaint
of his new friends, the viewer begins to
understand this comic adventure into
the imaginary realm is as backwards as
our fundamental understanding of hu-
man creativity. When, near the end of
the video, Li with the sternest of faces
likenes the tribe's (invisible) cave paint-
ings to the masterpieces of Picasso and
Mondrian, the parody is complete: the
artist is condescending protagonist;
the caveman is artist. But of course,
art has evolved beyond the horses of
Chauvet...or has it?

Ultimately, the representation of
what we see is no less complex than
the representation of what we think,
imagine, or predict. In the title work
of Li Ran's 2012 solo exhibition “Pretty
Knowledge,” this uncomfortable reality
is confronted head-on. Again playing
the part of parodist, Li emulates a viral
video of a French clairvoyant in 1980
predicting the happenings of the next
32 years (viral internet content being a
new entertainment phenomenon that
perhaps serves to disclose the laziness
of the collective mind—or its efficien-
cy). His take on the smug (and suspect;
no one but Nostradamus could be so
accurate, and besides, Final Cut Pro
can swiftly make any video look like it
was filmed decades back) know-it-all
attitude of the clairvoyant is undercut,
again, by an imitation of French so ig-
norant that it resembles not one word
of the actual language. The humor of
such *connerie* is amplified this time by
Li Ran's omission of any voiceover;
any meaning to be gleaned from this

babble relies entirely on subtitles, i.e.
creativity's most reliable tool, the writ-
ten word. Elsewhere, it is invalidated
by the awareness that while the origi-
nal clairvoyant discussed the future,
Li in fact discusses the past—thereby
equating the two, casting them under
the same dubious light. The work is yet
another cry for a serious evaluation of
Modernity, and is seconded in the ex-
hibition space by *Before-After*, four small
reproductions of details of William
Hogarth's 1736 pre-Modernist paint-
ing of essentially the same name. A fine
coat here, a barmaid's dress there, and
a flash of creamy thigh: Li transplants,
with an entirely Postmodern sleight of
hand, the juicy semiotics of a context
almost 300 years past. Unsurprisingly,
the canvases are not all that “pretty.”

These and many other works that
cannot be delineated here form only
one small corner of Li Ran's artistic ar-
chitecture. Should we choose to heave
ourselves deeper into its chasms, let
us first return to *Mont Saint-Victoire*,
and be warned. A cursory listen sug-
gests that there is a dialogue taking
place, but the more attention one pays,
the more obfuscatory their exchange
seems. For the writer, painter, parod-
ist, and skeptic Li Ran, this is the art
world: a lot of posturing, and very little
statement of any worth. Allow us to
invoke the nasally-inflected counsel of-
fered by the “proud middle-aged man”
halfway through this *pas de charlatans*:
“There is no need to discuss this tough
philosophical statement any further.
Back in Art, what we observe is beyond
the definition of the system and global
organization. Although it could be sorted
and sequenced, this clumsy division,
the tedious writing, mingled with the
urgent and yet fabricated illusion hid-
den behind, actually amount to a kind
of mental masturbation.”

“Pretty Knowledge”
AIKE-DELLARCO gallery
2012.09.05 - 10.15

《漂亮的知识》，2012年，双通道彩色有声录像装置，尺寸可变，6分27秒
Pretty Knowledge, 2012
Sound, color, dual-channel video installation, dimensions variable, 6 min. 27 sec.



magician.space
info@magician-space.com
+86 01 59789635
D, 798 Art Zone, Beijing
北京, 798 艺术区, D