

任瀚——镜像

作者：陈秀炜

翻译：潘丽

童年时期的任瀚在观察身为会计的母亲时，第一次接触到了一种既常见又精致的材料——复写纸。复写纸通常是在使用打字机或原子笔时，被用来对某个原始文件进行同步的多重复制。他在对这种材料反复而单调的使用以及这种材料本身的朴素当中发现了迷人之处。在他于C-空间的首次展览《模仿自然》中，设有一个狭小的白色立方空间，四壁被涂黑，艺术家用斧子对这些墙壁进行了局部破坏，这些半是残破的墙壁将他的《雪山》《水景》与《镜子》系列连为一体——石墨是这些作品中的主要材质。在为该展览进行的一次采访中，他提到，铅笔既简单又直接的特质吸引了他，这份对于简单直接的工具与材料的着迷，在他如今的艺术实践中也继续发挥着重要作用。他的最新作品描绘了灾难场景和希腊神话人物，这些作品中，他用铅笔在复写纸没有涂层的一面进行点状“雕刻”，同时在有颜色涂层的另一面把油墨凿掉。越是用力快速撞击，复写纸背面的这些圆点越是密集，图像正面显现出来的色彩就越浅。这种点画技法体现了修拉和西涅克“点彩派”的元素，不过并未用到色彩和特定风格的笔触。实际上，任瀚的画法更接近纹身当中的“点刺”技法，在这种技法里，轮廓与光影全然产生自同等大小、间距有别的圆点。这种具有重复性的技法需要高强度的体力劳动，但又具有冥想的性质，这一特质在他的图像中始终存在。

在他最近的《灾难风景》系列里，每幅作品都是由九张有雕刻印记的复写纸组成的一幅拼贴。这个系列中的《无题（雪崩一号）》与《无题（雪崩二号）》看似无甚差别，但实际而言，两幅图像所选的视角与所采用的方法均有不同：《无题（雪崩一号）》完全由手工完成，它描绘雪崩的视角是略成角度的；而《无题（雪崩二号）》艺术家将铅笔固定在电动曲线锯上作为工具，它描绘的是雪崩的正面。创作这两幅图像所采用的方法：前者的技法更柔和、更耗时但也更可控，后者则在机器的帮助下更为粗犷——两种方法都同各自的内容极为相似，分别说来便是，前者更为疏离的视角与后者对于迫近危险更为直接的角度。视角上的这点微小变化对于感知图像而言却有着相当显著的影响，即客观与主观之间的切换。

重复是任瀚的实践中反复出现的元素。在他的《镜子》系列（2010— ）中，对于石墨的消耗以及描画线条过程中对肢体动作的记录是作品中被强调的重点。新近的某些《镜子》作品是由分割的形状拼贴而成，而非像该系列的大多数作品中表现的那样，由巴洛克风格的小镜子中提炼出某个单一形状。这些形状的组合呈对称布局，因此在图像本身当中强化了映照的概念。当观众持续被引向这些图像的中央即所有线条的交汇处时，必须保持一定距离才能进行观察，特别是该系列中截至目前最大幅的作品、同教堂彩色玻璃窗的构成有些相似的《镜子三十号》。借由这些《镜子》作品中密集而有指向性的线条，身为观者的我们在观看、理解与沉思的重复性动作中被引领进一种冥想状态。重复也是挪用的特点之一，它在任瀚的工作方法中同样起到了关键作用。他作品中的视觉内容是基于图片搜索引擎得到的照片或照片片段。对找来的图像加以利用不单单是出于方便，同时也是一种明确的处理方法，这源于艺术家对现成品所含活力的关注。他认为，在对这些物品进行设计、制造和反复使用的过程散发着活力，在这组作品中，这些物品指的是现有物品和场所的数码图像。任瀚由此发现，自己在这一过程中所起的作用正是借用这些图像并通过复制与诠释的方式将它们重新置于上下文语境当中。重复同体力劳动关系密切。至于他的场域特定作品，如《温柔的撞击》（2013）和《精准撞击》（2015），艺术家的身体在这些作品里参与到了看似简单实则消耗的任务当中——在废弃建筑内用碎块砸向墙上一个被涂黑的圆；在三面彼此成直角的墙上凿出一个只能

从特定位置才能看到预设形状的完美环形——体力劳动不仅对身体造成痛苦，同时也需要控制与准确性方面的自律。

这些作品所探讨的主题中还有一条共同线索，那就是崇高的图像。用艺术家自己的话说，光是他作品中最为重要的元素。虽然光是神圣的象征，但任瀚却有意凭借他以石墨锻造的镜面在世俗与神圣之间建起一座“桥梁”。这也是他创作《雪山》《水景》以及最新的《灾难风景》系列的潜在动机。埃德蒙·伯克在《关于我们崇高与美观念之根源的哲学探讨》（1757）中讲到，崇高与敬畏、恐怖和危险的体验有关，而自然是最为崇高的事物，它能使观者产生最为强烈的感觉。这种对于崇高的浪漫观点显然持续影响了身为艺术家的任瀚，而由崇高所引发的激情的概念，即“灵魂的一切动作皆悬置并带有某种程度之恐怖的状态”（伯克），则在《坠落的人（The Falling Men）》当中得到了进一步强化——这个作品是艺术家对于霍尔奇尼斯（Goltzius）《四个不光彩的人（The Four Disgracers）》（1588）的诠释，作品中这些坠落者之间有一个共同点，那就是每个人都曾试图进入神的领域，但随后皆因自己的傲慢遭到了惩罚。任瀚选取霍尔奇尼斯版画原作中的全部四版——坦塔罗斯、伊卡洛斯、辉腾和伊克西翁，并同时呈现出有雕刻印记的复写纸复制品以及印在白纸上的复印品，它们作为一组作品是整个系列四组作品的一部分。尽管这些作品每一件都明显是由镜像复制品和原图像组成，并呈现出自我与他者以及天堂、地狱和人间的镜像作用，但或许很难注意到的是，通过自由坠落的人物所描绘的四种看似不同的造型，实际上从不同角度看来几乎是同一个造型。每一位坠落者都是一条腿向下弯曲而另一条腿抬起，一只胳膊抬起而另一只垂下。辉腾和伊卡洛斯在霍尔奇尼斯的版画中坠入光芒，在任瀚的诠释中，他们通过印出的“正像”显现出来，而伊克西翁和坦塔罗斯在黑暗中翻滚而下，他们则由雕刻消减的“负像”来描绘。

镜像所展现的双重性不仅标志着左与右之间、自我与他者之间永远共存的二元对立，它也标志着心灵与物质、心灵与身体以及人与自然之间的哲学性关联。正如迈克尔·艾伦·吉莱斯皮在《尼采之前的虚无主义》中所写的，“人立身于自然与神圣之间，被朝向相反方向的强劲力量拉扯着。”对任瀚而言，他立身于这些二元对立之间，并试图修建一条联结二者的小径。在人类企图通过身体的痛苦与疲惫枯竭——包括对感觉的剥夺以及对肉体的禁欲——来达到精神觉悟的历史中，人们这样做的目的是为了停止有意识的想法。在任瀚训练控制与平衡的实践中，他自省的努力似乎显现出了相似的效果，这在他的作品中也有所体现，而透过他的镜像，我们看到的并非自己的映像，而是一种心境，我们被引入到这种心境当中，以便能够反省我们自身的思想意识。

Ren Han – Mirror Image

Ophelia S. Chan

It was through observing his mother who worked as an accountant that Ren Han first encountered a common but delicate material as a child – carbon paper, which is commonly used for making multiple copies simultaneously of an original document when using a typewriter or a ballpoint pen. He found the repetitive and mundane use of this material, as well as the simplicity of the material itself fascinating. In his first exhibition at C-Space – *Emulating Nature*, which consisted of an installation of a small white cube space surrounded by black painted walls that were semi-destroyed by the artist with an axe that tied his *Snow Mountain*, *Waterscape* and *Mirror* series together – graphite was the primary medium in these works. In an interview for the exhibition, he mentioned that pencil's uncomplicated and direct quality were what he found intriguing, and this fascination with straightforward tools and materials has continued to play a crucial part in his artistic practice today. In his latest works depicting scenes of disasters and Greek mythological figures, he uses the pencil to "sculpt" on the non-coated side of the carbon paper in a dotting manner, chiseling ink on the opposite, pigment-coated side. The harder the impact of the markings and the denser these dots are on the back side, the lighter the colour would appear on the front of the image. This dotting technique embodies elements of Seurat and Signac's Pointillism, but without the use of colours and instead of the employment of specific styles of brushwork, Ren's markings are of varying sizes and lengths. This repetitive technique is labour-intensive but also meditative, a quality that is constant in his images.

In the recent *Disaster Landscape* series, each work consists of nine pieces of engraved carbon papers as a collage. The differences between *Untitled (Avalanche #1)* and *Untitled (Avalanche #2)* from the series might seem subtle, though as a matter of fact, the chosen viewpoint and the methods in which these images were sculpted are both different: *Untitled (Avalanche #1)* was manually completed in its entirety, depicting a slightly angled perspective of an avalanche; while the pencil was fixed on a moving jigsaw as a tool for *Untitled (Avalanche #2)*, depicting the front of an avalanche. The methods employed in creating these two images: one with a softer and more time-consuming but also more controllable technique, and the other in a blunter manner with the aid of a machine, resulting with very different type of markings – each correlating with its own content, respectively of a more distant viewpoint and a more immediate angle of an imminent danger. This slight change in perspective has a rather prominent effect on the way the image is perceived, and that is the shift between objectivity and subjectivity.

Repetition is a recurring element in Ren's practice. In his *Mirror* series (2010~), the consumption of graphite and the record of bodily gestures through the markings of lines are emphasis in these works. Some of the recent *Mirror* works are of a collage of shapes, rather than a single shape taken from the smaller baroque mirrors as portrayed in the majority of the works in the series. These combinations of shapes are composed in symmetry, whereby reinforcing the notion of mirroring in the image itself. While the viewer continues to be drawn to the center of these images where all the lines are converged, with *Mirror #30* in

particular, the largest piece in the series thus far that resembles the structure of stained glass windows in churches, we are required to keep a certain distance in order to observe it. Through the dense and directional lines in these *Mirror* works, as spectators we are guided into a state of meditation through the repeated act of looking, seeing and reflecting. Repetition is a characteristic of appropriation, which also plays a crucial role in Ren's working methods. The visual content in his works is based on photos or fraction of photos taken from image search engines. This use of found images is not simply out of convenience, but a determined process stemmed from the artist's interest in the energy embodied in ready-mades. He believes that energy evolves through the process of design, manufacture and repeated usage of these objects, and in this case, digital images of existing objects and places. Thus, Ren Han sees himself playing a role in this process in borrowing these images and recontextualizing them through means of copying and interpretation. Repetition is closely related to labour. In relation to his site-specific works such as *Soft Impact* (2013) and *Precise Impact* (2015), where the artist's body is involved in seemingly simple but consuming tasks – hitting a painted black circle on the wall in an abandoned building with gravels; chiseling a perfect annulus on three perpendicular walls that could only be seen in its intended form in a specific position – labour does not only entail physical distress but also involves the discipline of control and precision.

There is also a common thread in the subject matters these works deal with, and that is the image of the sublime. By the artist's own account, light is the most important element in his works. While light is a symbol of the divine, it is in Ren's intentions to establish a "bridge" between worldliness and the divine through his graphite-forged mirror planes. This is also an underlying motive in his *Snow Mountain*, *Waterscape* and the most recent *Disaster Landscape* series. Edmund Burke speaks of the sublime in connection to experiences of awe, terror and danger in *Philosophical Inquiry Into the Origins Of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), and that nature is the most sublime object, capable of generating the strongest sensations in its beholders. This Romantic conception of the sublime has evidently continued to influence Ren Han as an artist and this notion of passion caused by the sublime, which "is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror" (Burke), is further enforced in *The Falling Men* – the artist's interpretation of Goltzius' *The Four Disgracers* (1588), where the common bond between these fallers is that each one had tried to enter the realm of the gods and was subsequently punished for his arrogance. Ren took all four plates of Goltzius' original engravings – *Tantalus*, *Icarus*, *Phaeton* and *Ixion*, and present both the sculpted copy of carbon paper and the printed copy on white paper as a set of work that is part of a complete series of four. While it is evident that each of these works consists of a mirrored copy and an original image, resonating with the mirroring of self and other, as well as heaven, hell and earth, it might not be as noticeable that the four seemingly varied poses depicted in the free-falling figures are in fact more or less the same pose viewed from different angles. Each of the fallers has one leg bent down and the other raised, one arm raised and the other lowered. While *Phaeton* and *Icarus* fall in light in Goltzius' engravings, they appear in the "positive" printed copies of Ren's interpretation, thus as *Ixion* and *Tantalus* tumble through darkness, they are depicted in the "negative" sculpted copies.

The duality that the mirror image presents, does not only denote the co-eternal binary oppositions of left and right, or self and other, but also the philosophical relationships of mind and matter, mind and body, as well as man and nature. As Michael Allen Gillespie writes in *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, “[m]an stands between nature and the divine, and is pulled by powerful forces in opposite directions.” To Ren Han, he stands between these dualities, and attempts in constructing a pathway connecting the two. In the history of human’s attempt in reaching spiritual enlightenment through means of physical distress and exhaustion including sensory deprivation and the mortification of the flesh, they do so to cease conscious thoughts. In Ren Han’s practice of disciplining control and balance, his introspective efforts seem to take on similar effects that are also reflected in his works, and through his mirror images, it is not the reflection of ourselves that we see, but a state of mind that we are induced into, in order to reflect on our own consciousness.