

# ANTENNA SPACE

## Polyphonic Strategies

### —The Moving Image and its Expanded Fields

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In his discussion of Richard Serra's *Hand Catching Lead* (1968), Benjamin Buchloh puts forward the concept of "sculptural film": the repetitive attempts made by the hand to catch sheets of falling lead constitute in the film a continuous "procedure", which subordinates itself to neither the norms of (narrative) cinema nor that of (Greenberg's modernism) art, rather, through its introduction of certain sculptural principles, the moving-image is cast anew—as what Pollock does with his action paintings, Serra's film invokes a "communication system derived from body motion"<sup>1</sup>. According to Buchloh, the movement of the dropped lead sheets we see on screen is an analogy to the motion of the film within the rolling camera—that is, the work's visualization corresponds to the materiality of its medium—yet eventually it refers back to the field of sculpture, revealing "the self-evident procedures of the sculptural as its true meaning"<sup>2</sup>.

Nonetheless, this aforementioned "meaning" is metaphorical par excellence. In Rosalind Krauss's interpretation, Serra's practice enables the audience to perceive that "the hidden meaning he reads into the corporate body of the world are his own projections and that the interiority he had thought belonged to the sculpture is in fact his own interiority".<sup>3</sup> The deployment of moving-image in this (sculptural) process renders the sculpture here no more presentation of a "product", and instead now more illustrative of a "process", through which self-consciousness predicated on time-based experiences is evoked. As per Krauss's prominent theorization of the "expanded field": in the postmodernism context, sculpture unexpectedly strikes back from its then relatively rather peripheral and marginal positioning—turning the table through its simultaneous incorporation of all other mediums and the dissolving of any existing boundaries accordingly, thereby manages to take its flight from beneath modernism's shadow. Sculptures can surely be in the form of films—as Michael Snow and Anthony McCall has respectively demonstrated with their "structural films" and "solid light films"—the sculptures in question here are extended into the phenomenologically atmospheric, and thus stand in opposition to minimalism's rigid and enclosed systems.

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Buchloh, "Process Sculpture and Film in the Work of Richard Serra," *Richard Serra*, p.13.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Buchloh, *ibid*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Rosalind Krauss, "A View of Modernism," *Artforum* 11, no. 1 (September 1972), p. 48.

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The real pivot for Krauss's discussion, however, resides in a new kind of "media specificity", in which there is no more purity or exclusivity, but is collective and polyphonic instead. As in *Hand Catching Lead*, there's no need to identify either sculpture or film as the one true basis of the work, contrarily, it's necessary to see the two mediums as intermingling into a hybrid site, or say, a *dispositif*. Within this newly assembled site/*dispositif*, the contents and forms, as well as the structural and the material supports are highly coupled—it is precisely in these tight couplings one may see the old "medium specificity" as according to modernism reiterated. Yet where the new version differs is that in its "expansions", the entire site/*dispositif* in fact gets transformed into a "medium": "For, in order to sustain artistic practice, a medium must be a supporting structure, generative of a set of conventions, some of which, in assuming the medium itself as their subject, will be wholly 'specific' to it, thus producing an experience of their own necessity"<sup>4</sup>.

The particularity of this new "medium specificity" justifies and further facilitates intermedia artistic practices—with video works making perhaps the only exception. As the "post-medium" theory argues, it is indeed the arrival of video that truly proclaims the coming of the post-medium moment. For Krauss, the transmissivity and spontaneity of video enables its "existing in endlessly diverse forms, spaces and temporalities"<sup>5</sup>, while its unique technical apparatus generates a "discursive chaos, a heterogeneity of activities that could not be theorized as coherent or conceived of as having something like an essence or unifying core"<sup>6</sup>. Later in her essay "Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition", Krauss updates the concept of "material support" with that of "technical support" to better describe the medium condition emerging from artists' practices as they are now working with much more complex contemporary technical mediums and situations<sup>7</sup>. For all that, it is yet crucial to stress the point that in Krauss's thinking, distinguishing film and video (along with the later "new media") is an ontological difference—the former is ever so the typical medium of self-sufficiency modernism revels in, whereas the latter declares itself as the ultimate saboteur of the modernist's reverie.

With the research and exhibition project *Polyphonic Strategies*, I intend to propose—building upon the above theoretical basis—a hypothesis: Does moving-image constitute any de facto "starting point" for the participating artists (in even their

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<sup>4</sup> Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Rosalind Krauss, *ibid*, p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> "'Technical support' has the virtue of acknowledging the recent obsolescence of most traditional aesthetic mediums, while it also welcomes the layered mechanisms of new technologies that make a simple, unitary identification of the work's physical support impossible". See Rosalind Krauss, "Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition," *October* Vol. 116 (Spring, 2006), p. 56.

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moving-image works)? Or else, perhaps we may properly address the relevance in between their moving-image and non-moving-image practices in the light of "moving-image operating in its expanded fields"? And conversely to further raise the question as to whether paintings and sculptures may as well be seen as certain forms of moving-image? In the contemporary conditions, moving-image has long ceased to be indicative of but a specific mode of image and its material support, nor is it possible for us to cover its all-encompassing connotations and denotations with the phenomenologically metaphoric. The fact that various mediums have mutually built into and framed each other through the means of "expansions" back then when *Hand Catching Lead* was made precisely indicates that boundaries enclosing each and every medium yet persisted at the time. Whereas today mediums—along with the conventions, experiences, as well as aesthetics surrounding which—have gone through drastic transformations, to the point that even the distinction between film and video within the field of moving-image art has been dissolved. It's interesting to point out that all five participating artists in the show once received their education from fine arts academies in either the department of oil painting or that of sculpture. These experiences are more or less lasting and continue to affect the artists' later practices in subtle and ambiguous ways, eventually inducing them to take on distinctive strategies in each of their expanded practices: in YANG Fudong we see his reactivating the spiritual core of Chinese handscrolls through films; while CHEN Dandizi drives her video and photographic installations with the universality she finds present in the emotions; and as YU Honglei pursues the rhythms and pulsations that "short-videos" and sculptures share, LI Ran makes his works in paintings, videos and archival researches accompany and nourish each other; meanwhile there is WANG Xu building up a project of complexity in his assemblage of sculpture and moving-image. In any case, *Polyphonic Strategies* is not aspiring to complete here the project—which shall be of considerable complexity and immensity—it proposes, rather, it's more an attempt at shedding new light on the artists' specific practices and the operating logic of the mediums behind which.

## 无独有偶：影像及其扩展领域

文/杨北辰

本杰明·布赫洛在对于理查德·塞拉《手抓铅块》（1968）的论述中提出了“雕塑电影”这一概念：不断尝试抓握铅块的行动构成了一个持续的“过程”，这个过程既不从属于（叙事的）电影，亦不从属于（格林伯格意义上的现代主义）艺术，而是引入了某种雕塑原则的新的运动影像，类似波洛克的行动绘画一般，揭示了一个“由身体运动衍生出来的交流系统”<sup>8</sup>。在布赫洛的论述中，画面上铅块的坠落模拟了胶片在摄影机中的运动，即视觉化与媒介的物质性是相对应的，然而其最终指向依然回到了雕塑的场域：对于“雕塑的不言自明的程序作为其真正意义”的揭示。<sup>9</sup>

这个“意义”无疑是高度隐喻式的，按照罗莎琳·克劳斯解读，塞拉的实践令观众意识到“在世界整体中读到的隐藏意义是他自己的投射，他认为属于雕塑的内在性上其实是他自己的内在性。”<sup>10</sup>运动影像的参与使得雕塑不再以“成品”的面目示人，而更多得表现为“过程”透过时间性经验催生出的自我意识。在克劳斯的“扩展领域”理论中，雕塑在后现代主义的语境中实现了从场域边缘地带的“逆袭”，可以“合成”其他一切元素且不再具有边界感，从而逃离了现代主义的阴影。雕塑当然可以是电影，这在迈克尔·斯诺的结构主义电影抑或安东尼·麦考尔的“固体光电影”中都能找到

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<sup>8</sup> 本杰明·布赫洛，“理查德·塞拉作品中过程雕塑与电影”，《理查德·塞拉》，第13页。

<sup>9</sup> 本杰明·布赫洛，同上，第17页。

<sup>10</sup> 罗莎琳·克劳斯，“现代主义一瞥”，《艺术论坛》，第11卷第1期，1972年9月，第48页。

呼应，在此，雕塑延展为一种现象学式的气氛，以表达对于极简主义刚性与封闭的系统反对。

然而克劳斯真正关注的是一种新的“媒介特殊性”，其不再是纯粹与排他的，而是集合与复合的。在《手抓铅块》中，我们无需判别雕塑与电影何为真正的基础，而是应视二者为一种新的混合的场域，或者说一个布署（dispositif）。在这个场域/布署的内部，内容与形式、结构与物质性支撑之间是高度耦合的，这种紧密的关系无疑又与现当代主义版本的媒介特殊性产生了回响，不同之处在于，以“扩展”的名义，整个场域/布署转化成了“媒介”：“为了维持艺术实践，一种媒介必须是一种支撑性的结构，能生成一套约定俗成的惯例，其中一些惯例在以媒介本身作为其主体时，会完全地‘特殊于它’，从而制造出其自身必然性的经验。”<sup>11</sup>

新的媒介特殊性令艺术家的跨媒介创作变得更为顺理成章——然而唯一的例外来自录像。在“后媒介”理论中，真正的后媒介时刻以录像的到来为标志。对于克劳斯而言，录像的传输性与实时性令之“以无穷无尽的不同形式、空间和时间而存在”<sup>12</sup>，其独特的技术载体制造了“一种话语的混沌性、一种活动的异质性，不能被理论化为连贯的东西，也不能被设想为具备某种本质或统一核心的东西。”<sup>13</sup>在后来的文章《后媒介情境的两个关键时刻》中，克劳斯试图用“技术性支撑”更新“物质性支撑”，以描述艺术家在采取更为复杂、当代的技术条件下进行创作时所呈现的媒介状态。<sup>14</sup>必须指出

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<sup>11</sup> 罗莎琳·克劳斯，《北海航行：后媒介时代的艺术》，第 26 页。

<sup>12</sup> 罗莎琳·克劳斯，同上，第 26 页。

<sup>13</sup> 同上。

<sup>14</sup> 克劳斯解释道：“技术性支撑”这个说法意味着，一方面承认大多数传统美学媒介已然过时，另一方面亦接纳新技术的分层机制，使得以简单、单一方式来辨认作品的物质性基础成为不可能的任务。罗莎琳·克劳斯，《后媒介情境的两个关键时刻》，《十月》，第 116 期，第 56 页。

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的是，对于克劳斯而言，电影与录像（及其之后的新媒介）有着本体层面的差别，前者依然代表了自足的现代主义媒介，而后者则是宣告现代主义迷梦终结的破坏者。

在以上理论梳理的基础上，我试图通过“无独有偶”提出一则“假设”：运动影像是否是各位参展艺术家工作的“起点”？或者说，是否能够以“扩展场域的影像”来描述他们影像与非影像实践间的关系？绘画与雕塑是否同样是运动影像的某种形式？在当代条件下，运动影像已不再仅仅意味着某种特定的图像模式及其物质支撑，我们亦无法再沿用现象学式的隐喻去涵盖其包罗万象的内涵与外延。在《手抓铅块》的时代，不同媒介之间通过“扩展”而建立起相互形塑的关系，这恰恰反应了彼时媒介间边界的存在，而如今媒介的惯例、经验与审美均已彻底更新，即便在运动影像艺术内部电影与录像之间的区隔也不复存在了。有趣的是，展览中的五位艺术家几乎都曾在美院系统的油画系与雕塑系接受教育，这种“烙印”以婉转与暧昧的方式挥发出来，造成了他们彼此不同的扩展策略的基础：杨福东以电影的方式再次激活中国绘画的精神性内核，陈丹笛子以情感的共通性驱策录像与摄影装置，尉洪磊在“短视频”与雕塑之间寻找共同的韵律，李然令绘画、影像与档案研究相互滋养，王旭透过雕塑与影像的结合完成了复杂项目的搭建。总而言之，“无独有偶”并不希冀完成这个复杂且庞大的论证，而是以一种新的视角去描述艺术家的具体工作及其背后的媒介逻辑的尝试。