

Using Supernormal Stimuli and Erotic to Create Public Artworks: An Experiment in Countering Cultural Hegemony and Post-Colonialism in Chinese Urban Space

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This is a practice-led research project which presents a critical analysis of cultural hegemony and postcolonialism in Chinese urban space. It attempts to offer an alternative solution via a series of public artworks and a written thesis. The practice-based outcomes are based on an evolutionary psychological theory called ‘supernormal stimuli’ to trigger the audience’s desire.

As part of this analysis, my presentation investigates the deeper sense of colonisation and the role of westernisation in the process of Chinese modernisation in the late 20th century. By analysing the role of western religion in both western cultural, public space and communist China, compared to other non-western countries, China is a totally westernised country where a collective sub-consciousness has been developed through the communist revolution.

The other focus of this presentation is the difference between Supernormal Stimuli and eroticism, and how I utilise these two approaches in the production of artworks, providing different sense of affection during the encounter between the viewer and the art. By inducing different emotions from the viewers, like erotic arousal, affection, tenderness, caring, or sensuousness, my practice aims to induce Sylvia Wynter’s notion of “non-symbolic representation”, which is beyond the linguistic representation of Kant’s logic system.

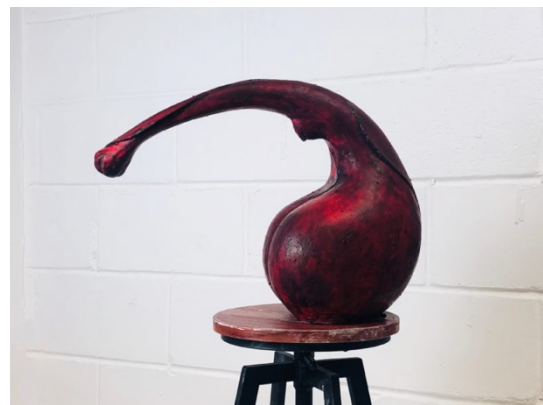
Within a politically sensitive environment like China, people are restrained from expressing critical opinions verbally. By allowing people’s subaltern voice being heard through bodily affect from my works, this presentation argues that artworks produced using supernormal stimuli and eroticism can be seen as a subversive resistance against cultural hegemony and postcolonialism without falling into the “binary trap” of decolonial and anti-hegemony arguments.

I will use a series of my artworks in the presentation alongside my research:

1. *Book of Disquiet*

Arduino & ECG Heartrate & Interactive Sculpture, 2021

The artwork *Book of Disquiet* combines the audience’s heartrate, artwork, and performance in public space. It explores the tension between the very personal matters of the human body and its relation to public space. The tension that sexuality is suppressed in public space, as the way



Book of Disquiet, Arduino & ECG Heartrate & Interactive Sculpture, 2021, Royal College of Art

Chinese government suppress people to speak out their political opinions. It inquires whether the personal and collective experience are able to address the cultural hegemony and postcolonial phenomenon in Chinese public space.

The artwork *Book of Disquiet* moves and shakes in different ways according to the heartrate of different spectators in responding to the surrounding environment. Although the physiological response cannot represent

people's conscious opinions, the registration of subtle but fundamental affection can produce non-symbolic representations which express Spivak's subalterns, the class who are incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name.



Book of Disquiet Arduino & ECG Heartrate & Interactive Sculpture exhibited in my double solo-exhibition: *Public Intimacy* March 19th - 25th 2019 Dyson Gallery, Royal College of Art

More detail of the artwork please see: <http://www.gaochangart.net/book-of-disquiet/>
Video please see: <https://vimeo.com/516703256>

2. *Speaking for the Speechless*, Robotic Interactive Sculpture. 2022-Ongoing Project



Speaking for the Speechless, Robotic Interactive Sculpture with Arduino, and Sensor Mixed Media Installation 2022

This is a robotic interactive sculpture, which speak for the people are unable to speak up. The inner structure is 3D printed structure which coordinate with 9 motors inside the structure. Each motor oversees different motion of the action when the mouth speaks. This work intends to invite the viewers to send messages to the message sensor embedded inside the sculpture.

Within a political system like China, where people are restrained from expressing critical opinions, this work serves as an agency to encourage people to express their opinions via my artwork freely. I plan to create a multi-

sensational sensuous space in my final exhibition of PhD studies, by presenting with erotic sculptures, hologram installations, films projections and performance in the space, this work will be situated in the final stage, where people sensitivity has been provoked in such sensuous environment.

More detail please see: <http://www.gaochangart.net/speaking-for-the-speechless/>



Still image of *Emotional Encounter* Hologram Installation Film Still, 2020

3. *Emotional Encounter*, Hologram Installation 2019

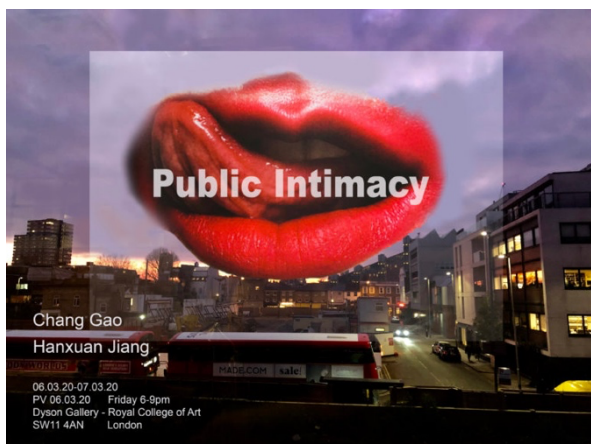
The hologram installation *Emotional Encounter* shows 40 seconds of a video loop depicting the action of a tongue licking the lips and biting the lower lip. The symbolic or metaphoric meaning of the licking lips show the double dimensions of the work. The licking and biting actions of the mouth symbolises the greediness of the capitalist developers' desire. Meanwhile, the sensual action of licking the lips may trigger "individual passion and urges". By inducing audience's sensuous desire, there is something beyond the representation of the artwork, as a form of non-linguistic representation, which inspiring people's sensitivity towards environment." The intensified sensitivity and amplified sense of the alienation let people experience the subalternity affectively in my work.

Video please see:

<https://vimeo.com/516703817>

Images please see:

<http://www.gaochangart.net/emotional-encounter/>



Double-solo Exhibition *Public Intimacy* poster, Dyson Gallery Royal College of Art, 2019

3. Double-solo Exhibition: *Public Intimacy* 2020 Dyson Gallery

Public Intimacy focuses the ambiguity between the public space and private space. It explores the tension between the physiological response of the human body and its relations to public space. It exams the relations between humans, space and the sense of intimacy. The exhibition presents multiple media works using peppers ghost installations, films, prints, interactive sculptures and mixed media installations.



Double-solo Exhibition: *Public Intimacy* 2020 Dyson Gallery

More images and details please see:
<https://www.rca.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/public-intimacy/>
<http://www.gaochangart.net/double-solo-exhibition-public-intimacy/>



AR series of work: *Organic Access* 2019-2021 Victoria London

4. AR series of artworks:
***Organic Access* 2020**

Hannah Arendt wrote, “the main objective of the public space is to bring us together and to restrain our individual passions and urges”. People are repressed from behaving freely in public space because the social norms and moral standards require people to follow social rules. By using the Augmented Reality technology within the urban



AR series of work: *Organic Access* 2019-2021 Victoria London

environment of Victoria Station, the series *Organic Access* creates an opportunity for the public to encounter a moment that merges the public and the private, the virtual and the real.

The location I chose for *Organic Access* is Victoria Station. It is the place where the city landscape is marked by towering contradictions between the historical architecture and modern buildings. The city landscape itself has already created a strong contradiction, which usually

creates a strong sense of alienation and cultural identity anxiety. By using the AR interactive technologies, the work will digitally project the sculptures and moving films onto the surface of the buildings or above the cities on the surface of buildings. By observing and interacting with a very slow movement of a tongue licking the lips, or a very slowly squeezed ketchup squeezer, the audience's instinctive desire is provoked and released.

More Details please see: <http://www.gaochangart.net/2019/01/21/public-access/>



Intimate Fantasy. Film Still image, 2021



Intimacy Fantasy Film still 2021

For remembering the biggest fantasy of festive celebration at the end of pandemic year 2020.

<http://www.gaochangart.net/intimate-fantasy/>



6. Final Exhibition
Dyson Gallery 2022,
Royal College of Art:

My final exhibition will use a multi-media installations like sculpture, robotic sculpture, interactive film, hologram installation, digital prints to create a feedback system between the viewer and the space.

It meant to compares the relation and differences between supernormal stimuli and erotic in relation to public and private space. By displaying different categories of artworks in different environment, the feelings provoked from the audience could be distinctively different because of the character of different environment. It questions the difference between public space and private space and its relation to the multiplicity of feelings provoked by the supernormal stimuli and erotic. Such complicity of the human emotions, not only be suppressed in public space, but also be excluded under patriarchic hegemony or fascist environment. As the sensuousness, fluidity, eroticism are not available to contemporary hegemonic environment, I would like to bring the multiplicity of sensuousness back to the public space, as a sense of resistance to response to my research question: using supernormal stimuli and erotic to create public artworks: an experiment in countering cultural hegemony and post-colonialism in Chinese urban space.

More artworks please see my website: www.gaochangart.net

Or my RCA page: <https://www.rca.ac.uk/students/chang-gao/>

Or RCA research biennale page: <https://research-biennale.rca.ac.uk/projects/using-supernormal-stimuli-to-create-public-artworks-an-experiment-in-countering-cultural-hegemony-and-post-colonialism-in-chinese-urban-space>