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Wenbin Liu

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MASTER'S THESIS

**PHOTOGRAPHER'S UNCONSCIOUS
IMAGES**

**FROM SURREALISM TO CONTEMPORARY
PHOTOGRAPHY**

Wenbin Liu

Thesis advisor: **Michal Šimůnek**

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AKADEMIE MÚZICKÝCH UMĚNÍ V PRAZE

FILMOVÁ A TELEVIZNÍ FAKULTA

Fotografie

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

**FOTOGRAF A JEHO NEVĚDOMÉ OBRAZY
OD SURREALISMU K SOUČASNÉ
FOTOGRAFII**

Wenbin Liu

Vedoucí práce: **Michal Šimůnek**

Oponent práce:

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Photographer's unconscious images from surrealism to contemporary photography

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Abstract

The thesis studies the representation of the unconscious in photography, following the history of photography and analysing the psychic reality of photographers who worked in different periods and environments. The thesis starts with the inchoate unconscious images generated by photography, studying what circumstances and chance inspired photographers to explore human's inner world during the pre-surrealism years. After that, the thesis focuses on the cause of the formation and the character of surrealism photography, particularly following modern psychology. The final thesis chapter focuses on how contemporary Chinese and Japanese photographers absorb and Oriental culture accepts surrealist aesthetics and imagination.

Keywords: Unconscious, Surrealist photography, Dream, Psychic reality

Abstrakt

Diplomová práce se věnuje reprezentaci nevědomí ve fotografii, a to v historické perspektivě a na příkladu vybraných fotografů, kteří pracovali v různých historických kontextech. Práce se věnuje počátečním pokusům zachytit nevědomí prostřednictvím fotografie a věnuje se různým okolnostem, které v presurrealistickém období inspirovaly fotografy k prozkoumávání vnitřního světa lidí. V další části se práce zaměřuje na podmínky vzniku surrealistického přístupu k fotografii, který byl ovlivněn zejména poznatky moderní psychologie. Závěrečná část práce se zaměřuje na současnou čínskou a japonskou fotografii a na to, jak orientální kultura přijímá a absorbuje surrealistickou estetiku a imaginaci.

Klíčová slova: bezvědomí, surrealistická fotografie, sen, psychická realita

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Introduction

If we retrospect the history of photography, we can find a pretty clear development path that the realistic world was regarded as the object, observing the objective world through lens. The examples involve the picture of Paris street by Louis Jacques Mand Daguerre, the book "Pencil of Nature" by Talbot, Straight photography by F/64 group, photojournalism and documentary. While we should not overlook another path of photography development that regards the human's internal world as the object although we always ignore it.

Compared with the rapid developing technology and science, we still know so little about our psychic world. We could not yet find a perfect way to overcome mental issues although Freud has opened the door of modern psychology and C.G. Jung has found the collective unconscious. On the other hand, photographers have been trying to not only explore the external world but also the interior world of humans by which we could know more about ourselves. By unscrambling dreams, psychologists could decode some information from unconsciousness. To some extent, photography is similar to a dream which contains a lot of unconscious messages especially for those photographers who concentrate on psychic reality. The notion of psychic reality came with surrealism which was a key period for advancing unconscious images. While I suppose that it is necessary to research the images of the pre-surrealism and post-surrealism photographers as well, so that we could grasp the whole development path of unconscious photography.

Chapter 1. Early Photographic Practices Used in Psychology

Just three months after William Fox Talbot announced the invention of negative-positive process photography in 1839, a physician-Dr Hugh Welch Diamond took his first photo in April.¹ "In 1852, Diamond held an exhibition at the London Society of Arts, which was named 'The Types of Insanity' and included a series of portraits of his asylum patients. After that, those photos were exhibited multiple times in London and Norwich with similar names, including 'Phases of the Insane' (1854), 'Portraits of Insane Persons' (1856), 'Studies of Insane Persons' (1857), and 'Illustrations of Mental Disease' (1859)." ² From 1848 to 1858 he was nominated as Resident Superintendent of the Female Department at the Surrey County Asylum, therefore Diamond applied photography on his medical training and started to take classical studio style portraits of his patients. Those photographic documentation consisted of half body, sitting poses, frontal angle of view, and plain fabric background. Diamond was motivated by photographic reproducibility, and supposed that photography could render and preserve insanity in a faithful way rather than artistic record with ridicules. In 1856, he published an article named "On the Application of Photography to the Physiognomic and Mental Phenomena of Insanity", and he regarded photography as a mirror that he said 'a perfect and faithful record':

*"In conclusion I may observe that Photography gives permanence to these remarkable cases, which are types of classes, and makes them observable not only now but for ever, and it presents also a perfect and faithful record, free altogether from the painful caricaturing which so disfigures all the published portraits of the Insane as to render them nearly valueless either for purposes of art or science."*³

¹ Bloore, Carolyn. "Diamond, Hugh Welch." Oxford Art Online, 2003.
doi:10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.t022602.

² Pearl, Sharrona. "Through a Mediated Mirror: The Photographic Physiognomy of Dr Hugh Welch Diamond." *History of Photography* 33, no. 3 (2009), 288-305.
doi:10.1080/03087290902752978.p291.

³ Diamond. "I. On the application of photography to the physiognomic and mental phenomena of insanity." *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London* 8 (1856).p24.



Figure 2 Portrait of a patient, Surrey County Asylum, c. 1855, Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond © The Royal Photographic Society Collection



Figure 1 Portrait of a patient, Surrey County Asylum, c. 1855, Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond © The Royal Photographic Society Collection

Insane behaviour, Diamond believed, was presented not only in the face, but also in the other details of appearance including hair, clothing and body posture of the patients. Furthermore, he expected audiences and psychologists could analyse the subjects that reflected from the mediated mirrors. Partially, when patients watch those medical photographs about themselves, they could get the opportunity of standing at the point of psychiatric doctors.

Based on physiognomic principles, the sites of the hidden depths of the mental asylum and the deranged human mind could be accessible with the aid of photographic reproducibility. Diamond's principles supposed that the self-determined health and illness of the patients were reflected in understanding of appearance. The mediation of photography could supply the distance and avoid immediate unrecognising. Due to the distance and time gap, patients would have enough space and time for understanding appearance.

Diamond attempted to cure his patients with the aid of those photos, and he recorded many cases that 'Photography unquestionably led to the cure'.⁴ He believed that cure should be produced from acknowledgement of insanity. However, there was no evidence which could approve the therapy function from his photography in history. Afterward, he researched or practiced no longer in the aspect of photographic treatment of Mental derangement.

I suppose that the first reason for his failure comes from the restriction of photographic technique. The camera was so big that it was hard to move it easily during the 1850s. Diamond had to work indoor and relied on the sunlight from the windows with a low shutter speed. The whole shooting process finished under the direction of photographers. It was highly manipulated and staged by Diamond's hand. Therefore, in fact, patients watched and judged themselves through Diamond's eye. If the patients could hold the camera and the whole process, I believe that the results should be pretty different. While it was impossible, as photography was an expensive tool in those years and only people from the upper echelons



Figure 3 William H. Mumler, "Unidentified Woman with Three Spirits," 1862-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD760.1.19)

could afford that. Secondly, Diamond's practice lacked strong psychological theory. His inspiration mainly came from physiognomy which was lack of scientific basis. When he announced the article "On the application of photography to the physiognomic and mental phenomena of insanity" in 1856, Sigmund Freud had just been born in a small town in Austria. Thirdly, Diamond's photography challenged public moral nerve. Showing the portraits of insanity to the public and urging the patients to judge themselves were both not fitted with general morals. From the details of

⁴ Diamond. "I. On the application of photography to the physiognomic and mental phenomena of insanity." *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London* 8 (1856). p3-4.

the photos that chaos hair and plicated clothes, we can find that those patients come from lower class or looked after not well by their family. The Surrey County Asylum where Diamond worked was a welfare institute, so that it was possible to take photos of the patients. However, during his life at Twickenham asylum, he was not free to continue his photographic physiognomy, as the patients there were from the upper echelons of society.

On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, just around four years after Diamond stopped his research on insanity portraits, an American photographer named William Mumler got his first spiritual photography from his darkroom. Mumler was a jewel engraver who was employed by Bigelow Brothers & Kennard, leading jewellers of Boston, and photography was just his hobby.

Spirit photography started in the 1860s. People always believed that some photographers were able to capture spirit with their magic cameras. The classical spirit photography is a kind of Victorian style portraits of people sitting on a chair with blurred and light ghosts of the dead family members.⁵ Actually, it was just new photographic technique which was invented occasionally that depends on multiple negatives print or double exposure on single negative.

In the photograph of figure 3, an old woman sits in front of the lens, dressing dark colour shirt with white collar and satin fabric skirt. That means she dressed up seriously. Two hands cross on legs with a small book which looks like a scripture. She was probably a spiritualist, as many believers of spiritualism often came to Mumler for taking spirit photography during that years. Behind her body, there are three persons' spirits that look like watermark. The man put his arms on the woman's shoulders, which presents a kind of intimate relationship. I would like to believe that the

⁵ Johnson, William, Mark Rice, Carla Williams, Therese Mulligan, and David Wooters. *A History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present*. Taschen America Llc, 2012.p330.



Figure 5 William H. Mumler, "Colonel Cushman with the Spirit of a Quaker Lady" 1870-75. The J.Paul Getty Museum (84.XD760.1.5)



Figure 4 William H. Mumler, "Robett Bonner with the Spirit of His Wife Ella Bonner" 1872. The J.Paul Getty Museum (84.XD760.1.1)

woman might be satisfied with this photo, as they could contact with each other's body.

Mumler invented his spirit-pictures accidentally. We could say surrealism photography advanced this approach that results produced by chance without strong conscious control. We will deal with this deeply in the next chapter. When Mumler took his first spirit photo, he could not understand how it happened. For him, in the book of "The Personal Experiences of William H. Mumler in Spirit-Photography (1875)" he described it as "Unaccountable":

"The picture was indeed at that time a strange looking one, and, from the fact that it was taken when no visible person was present but myself, it was, to me, unaccountable. But on submitting it to the operator for an explanation, his opinion was that the negative was taken upon an old glass that had previously been used for the same purpose, but had been insufficiently cleaned; and when a second negative was taken upon the

*same glass, the latent form, so to speak, was re-developed sufficiently to give an indistinct and shadowy outline. This theory was at the time, with my limited knowledge of photography, acceptable....."*⁶

Through tabloid journalism and photographic trade journals, William Mumler's photographic ghost story impressed the public as spirit photography. The report, "Spirit Photographs: A New and Interesting Development" was announced by Herald Progress New York in the October 1862, was the starting point for combining Mumler with news publishing. Mumler was introduced to the public as following—

"Mr. W. H. Mumler, an amateur photographer and practical chemist of Boston, was engaged on Sunday, October 5th, at the photograph gallery of Mrs. Stuart, at No. 258, Washington-street, in adjusting the chemicals, which had become disarranged."



Figure 6 William H. Mumler, "Fanny Conant with Vashti, a Spirit Girl" 1870-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD760.1.14)

The article also mentioned Mumler's statement about his first spirit photography: *"This photograph was taken of myself, by myself, on Sunday, when there was not a living soul in the room beside me—'so to speak.' The form on my right I recognize as my cousin who passed away about twelve years since.—W. H. Mumler."*

During the early nineteenth century, a variety of new religions emerged such as Mormonism, Seven-Day Adventism, Millerism and Spiritualism. Those religions insisted on the reality of spirits, life after death and the

⁶ Kaplan, Louis. *The Strange Case of William Mumler, Spirit Photographer*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.p70.

possibility to communicate with the world of the spirit.⁷ Hence, many people fully believed the existence of ghosts and supposed that cameras could see the invisible world which our eyes cannot see. In these early years since photography was invented, all the things about photography was mysterious for people.

In 'The Personal Experience', Mumler recalled the story that how he got the first report:

"One day a gentleman visited me who I knew was a Spiritualist; and not at that time being inclined much to the spiritual belief myself..... I therefore showed him the picture, and with as mysterious an air as possible, but without telling an untruth..... I stated to him "that this picture was taken by myself when there was no visible person present but myself.

*He asked me if I would put this statement on the back, and sign my name to it? I did so, and gave it to him, never dreaming of any publicity ever being given to it. I was greatly surprised in about a week from that time, in receiving a paper from New York called the Herald of Progress, published, I believe, by Andrew Jackson Davis, and having a column or more descriptive of this very picture, with my name and statement that were on the back."*⁸

Spirit photography was more and more popular, so as to Mumler quit his job and established his own photo studio for business. Newspapers and magazines reported a lot about his story and ghostly developments. As Mumler recalled, the help from New York Sun was great for his business.⁹ A representative of the New York Sun, Mr. Hitchcock with a celebrated New York photographer investigated his claims to spirit-photography. Mumler described this investigation as "entirely satisfactory", as Hitchcock promised that he would give Mumler an extended notice in the New York Sun. This report drew the attention from all classes of society including the high and

⁷ Harvey, John. *Photography and Spirit*. London: Reaktion Books, 2007.p26.

⁸ Mumler, William H. *The Personal Experiences of William H. Mumler in Spirit-photography*. 1875.

⁹ Kaplan, Louis. *The Strange Case of William Mumler, Spirit Photographer*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.p81.

the low, the rich and the poor, to his business. More and more guests came to his studio, and the price even increased to 10 dollar per shot. However, the nice situation did not stay for a long time. Some people started to doubt the photographer's ability to capture spirit. Eventually Mumler was arrested and censured in court. Even though he was released, his reputation was destroyed. In the rest decades of his life, he lived with poverty.

The reason why spirit photography was so popular , relates to the social and the political context of that time deeply. During the Civil War, many families lost their relatives, therefore the society was full of bereavement. Besides, the mortality rate of infants was pretty high due to the backward health care after the war. Therefore, we can find lots of spirit photos about mothers and dead babies.

Mumler's ghostly developments could help people to ease their pain of losing relatives. It is also a kind of replacement of mourning. Thanks to Mumler's spirit photography, families that have been ripped apart and asunder could reunite and take comfort.¹⁰ To understand what was the key in Mumler's spirit photography, we should analyse the theoretical basis of mourning. As Sigmund Freud wrote that "the creation of spirit" was "man's first theoretical achievement".¹¹ It means Freud supposed that the animistic era is the hotbed where is full of the positing and projecting of spirit for theory. Hence, spirit photography is connected



Figure 7 William H. Mumler, "Five Spirits with Photograph on Table" 1862-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD760.1.13)

¹⁰ Goldsmith, Barbara. *Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull*. New York: Knopf, 2011. p49.

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1950), p93.

with the primal and primordial theoretical activity of humans, and it fixes the spirits of the dead onto negatives. According to Freud's psychoanalysis, survivors wish to find an approach of dealing with the loss of their ancestors. And mourning would prompt the "projective creation of souls and spirits". Projection could present the interrelationship between psychic and technological drives. About unconscious processes and psychoanalytic technique, Freud always likes to relate them to technical media and the domain of archaeology. Spirit photography, as a technical media, was used to telecommunicate with the mourn dead.

In the early developmental stage of photography, because of curiosity, Diamond used a camera as a perfect tool to explore man's internal world where it is so mysterious and unknown. Owing to the occasional invention of the technique of photographic processing and the influence from the social environment, Mumler's spirit developments became a sort of psychotropic anaesthetic for the public. Even though both of them were interrupted due to different reasons, those works from both of Diamond and Mumler had been the references and inspirations for the further development of unconscious photography.

Chapter 2. Freud, Surrealism and Photography



Figure 8 André Breton by Man Ray, 1924

During World War I (1914-1918), human's spirit and mind encountered a huge trauma. The authority and rationality of operating the world was doubted. Meanwhile, the exploration and theory in the aspect of unconscious from Freud fitted this circumstance. Breton met Freud in Vienna in October 1921. During that year, some fragment translations appeared in French, and the first book of Freud which was published in French 1922 named "The Psychopathology of Everyday Life". Under this situation, there was a force, which developed from DADAism and against the military/psychiatric barbarism of wars, the values of the art and the literature tradition, that formed surrealism in France.

What is surrealism? Surrealism advocated the presentation of human's unconscious and irrationality. Freud invented the theory of psychoanalysis and practised it in the clinical field. For surrealists, they practised the theories of unconscious in the social field. They focused on "psychical reality" after experienced traumatic and disruption of notions of sanity and normality. They found that the reality of the human subject is also driven by psychical reality not just by material reality. Andre Breton explained about the definition of surrealism on 1 June 1934, and he marked the first period of surrealism as 'a purely intuitive epoch'.¹²



Figure 9 Man Ray (Emmanuel Radnitzky)
Rayograph 1922

During this period (1919-1924), Man Ray produced a lot of automatic images by the technique of photograms. Significant practices of surrealism started from automatic writing which is fundamental of early 'intuitive' years. They attempted to get rid of conscious control in order to represent psychic expression.¹³ Actually, automatic writing was not an invention of surrealism. It came from psychiatry and 19th century spiritualism. The use

¹² Andre Breton, 'What is Surrealism?' trans. and published in English in 1936 (Faber and Faber) by David Gascoyne and reprinted in Franklin Rosemont (ed.), *What is Surrealism?* (London Pluto, 1989).

¹³ Bate, David. *Photography and Surrealism: Sexuality, Colonialism and Social Dissent*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2004. p54.

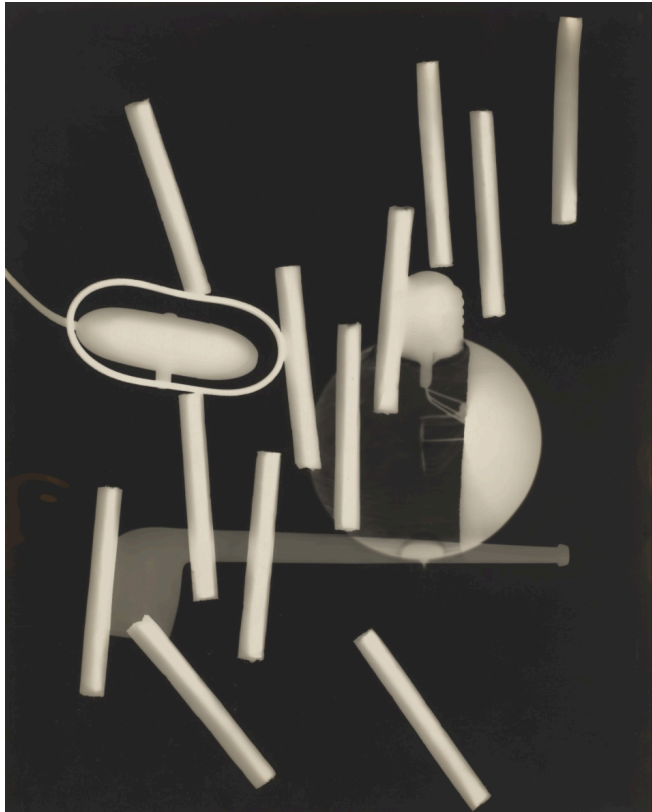


Figure 10 Man Ray (Emmanuel Radnitzky) Rayograph 1923

of automatic writing for spiritualists was related to occult phenomena and they believed in life after death. The spiritualists supposed that there are two layers in mind, the conscious mind and subconscious layer, which was rejected by Freud. The issue about automatism which was frequently discussed by Freud appeared in the books 'The psychopathology of Everyday Life' and 'Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious'.

'Modest recording instruments' of psychical thoughts is the aim for surrealists. They encouraged everyone to try automatic writing no matter if they have talent or not.¹⁴

Instead of writing, Man Ray used light in the darkroom to develop psychic automatism in the 1920s. Like the invention of spirit photography for William H. Mumler, Man Ray invented photograms accidentally as well. Photographs generated without a camera. Man Ray put diverse objects on the photo paper and used light to expose them directly, and then he got those weird abstract images. Man Ray named this new technique as Rayograph. Man Ray's photograms challenged people's optic nerves. As it is hard to recognise what those objects are in reality. Even though all the objects come from reality, Man Ray brings us a surreal point of view to observe the world. It looks not as a result of careful arrangement. Those objects are distributed randomly and chaotically. But when different objects

¹⁴ Breton, 'Manifesto of Surrealism 1924, p28.

are together, we could not stop to guess what is the relationship between them.

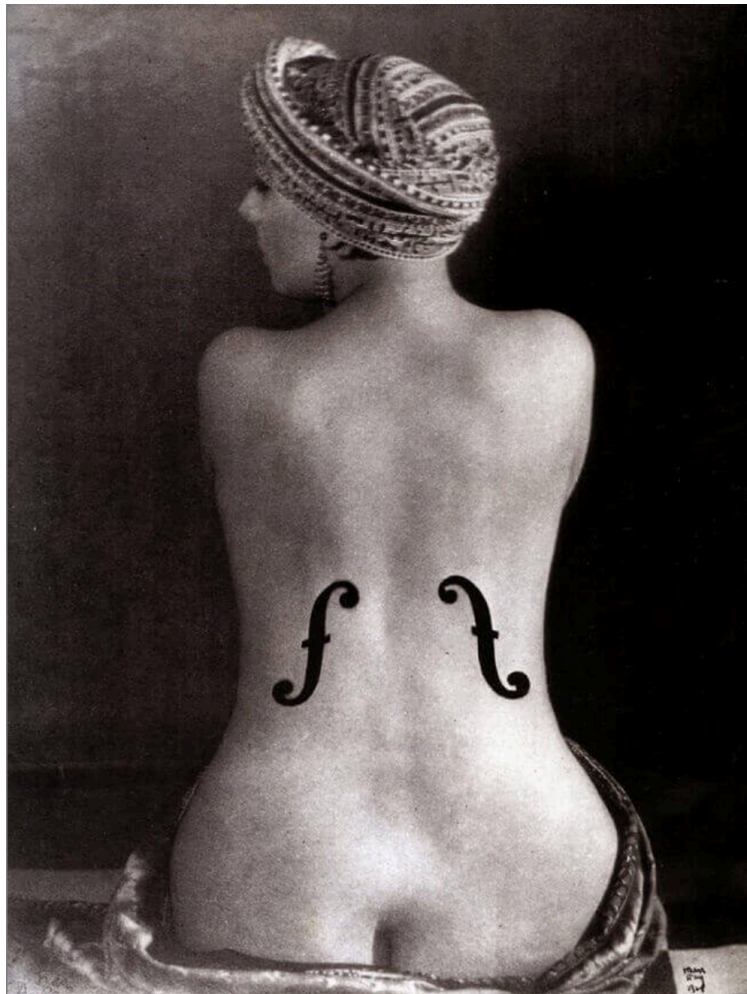


Figure 11 Ingre's Violin, 1924 by Man Ray

From Man Ray's images we could find that he used jokes to challenge rationality. He mixed a kind of irrational and puzzled joke into his photography. As Freud said, jokes are good way to avoid social restriction and censorship. With the pleasure yielded by jokes, repression could be released.

"Whereas it was a condition for the effectiveness of a joke that both persons should be subject to approximately the same inhibitions or internal resistances, it will be seen that it is a condition for the naïve that the one person should possess inhibitions which the other is without. The apprehension of the naïve lies with the person provided with inhibitions, and he alone obtains the yield of pleasure which the naïve brings about. We

*have come near to guessing that that pleasure arises from the lifting of inhibitions. Since the pleasure from jokes has the same origin - a core of verbal pleasure and pleasure from nonsense, and a casing of pleasure in the lifting of inhibitions or in the relief of psychical expenditure - this similar relation to inhibition explains the internal kinship between the naïve and jokes. In both of them the pleasure arises through the lifting of internal inhibition."*¹⁵



Figure 12 Man Ray(Emmanuel Radnitzky)Torso1923

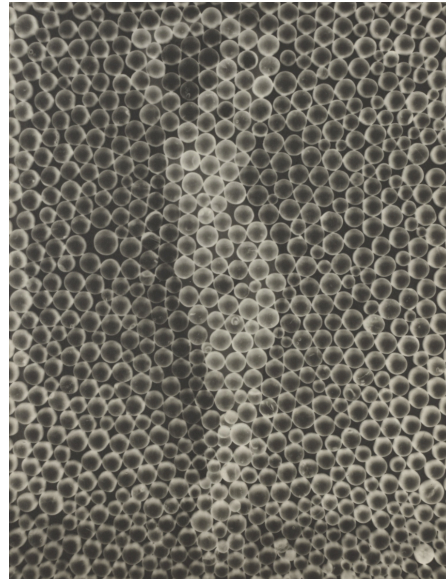


Figure 13 Man Ray,Untitled1929

In Man Ray's surrealism photography, we can find a lot of photos related to female nude. He regarded the female body as the object of the expression of surrealism. At least one thing could be sure that it came from love, as from Kiki, Lee Miller to Dora Mara all of them were deeply loved by Man Ray. Man Ray sought for pleasure through photography in the bad environment. Photography could supply a program of staring at a lover, which could bring pleasure.

"For there are certain intermediate relations to the sexual object, such as touching it and gazing at it, which are recognized as preliminary sexual aims. On the one hand, these activities are themselves accompanied by

¹⁵ Freud, Sigmund. The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious. London: Penguin UK, 2002.p152.

*pleasure; on the other hand, they heighten the excitation, which should persist until the final sexual aim is attained."*¹⁶

The love objects are always the replacement of the mother. When a child encountered generous rebuke or frustration, he would put himself into mother's arms and look for comfort. If we regard the government as a father who is generous and authoritative, however, surrealists were disappointed with this "father". The soft from mother was so necessary for them to console the trauma. Nude photos could be seen as a method of challenging taboos. Breton said that lifting the taboos that bar us from freely treating the sexual world was what surrealists ever did.



Figure 14 Man Ray, Noire et blanche, 1926

As Breton recalled the development path of surrealism, he defined the period 1925 - 1934 as the second phase.¹⁷ The main reason for this shift was the impact from the reality of the social and political world. The French colonial war against Morocco stimulated the nerves of the surrealists and

¹⁶ Freud, Sigmund. On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works. 1991.p88.

¹⁷ Breton, 'What is Surrealism?', p116.



Figure 15 Man Ray, Self-Portrait with Camera, 1931

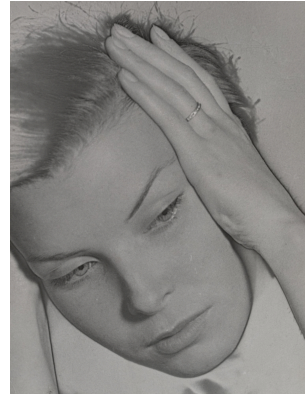


Figure 16 Man Ray
Untitled, 1929



Figure 17 Man Ray The
Veil, 1930

woke them up from the ideal inner world. Afterwards, they put 'matter' on the first position and 'mind' on the second position. Breton described this period as "a reasoning epoch" in which the use of image and photography reached its peak.

As we know from the Freudian theory that visual images are closer to the means of the operation of unconscious. In the surrealism images, it was often seen that different objects without any connection were combined together. And some metaphorical symbols or contents were arranged in surrealism images, which could inspire viewers to imagine and conjecture. The function and principle of this method are similar to dream-displacement:

"I think it will be easy to recognise the psychic force which expresses itself in dream-displacement. The result of this displacement is that the dream-content no longer has any likeness to the nucleus of the dream-thoughts,



Figure 18 Man Ray, Untitled, 1930

*and the dream reproduces only a distorted form of the dream-wish in the unconscious. But we are already acquainted with dream-distortion; we have traced it back to the censorship which one psychic instance in the psychic life exercises over another. Dream-displacement is one of the chief means of achieving this distortion. Is fecit, cui profuit. We must assume that dream-displacement is brought about by the influence of this censorship, the endopsychic defence."*¹⁸

Dream-content is always saved as the form of visual images in memory. Similarly, surrealism photographers save the dream-work in film which could transfer unconscious messages.

In 'The Interpretation of Dreams', we have learnt from Freud that the meaning of any dream-image could only be found by the patient who had the dream rather than the doctor. Surrealism photographers started from their own unconscious and interior reality to produce photographs rather than expressing others unconscious information. That is the point where they are different from the early photographers Mumler and Diamond, those who had been trying to reveal others' internal world. Undoubtedly, Freudian theory was the essential factor of this movement.

In the scene of dream, the material looks always not understandable at the first glance. Although the censorship does not prevent the material anymore, it would still interfere with the process in which the material eludes the censorship through a rhetorical mutation including camouflage, replacement, dramatisation and secondary revision.¹⁹ That is the reason

¹⁸ Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1997. p138.

¹⁹ Bate, David. *Photography and Surrealism: Sexuality, Colonialism and Social Dissent*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2004.p69

why distorted, disordered and uncanny visual factors emerge often. Freud listed a series of examples of motifs about uncanny: "1, fear of losing eyes; 2, inanimate objects coming to life; 3, characters who are identical; 4, repetition of features, actions; 5, involuntary repetitions as more than mere 'chance'; 6, dread of the 'evil eye'; 7, death and dead bodies; 8, states of madness and epilepsy; 9, being buried alive; 10, darkness, silence or solitude."²⁰ In the darkroom, Man Ray and his assistant, Lee Miller accidentally found a technique that by exposing the film prematurely, and not letting the background and image heal together to get



Figure 19 Man Ray Indestructible Object (or Object to Be Destroyed) 1964 (replica of 1923 original)

the halo-like effects.²¹ The white and the black would shift toward the opposite trend, and a white line emerges in the intersection. When watching those images, it seems like going into another space, and the time stopped at the moment of passing the door, creating a kind of strong uncanny atmosphere. Even though it came from a mistake, Man Ray was pretty interested in this technique and named it as 'Solarisation', and photographed many female nudes by solarisation.

In 1935, a young German artist visited Paris and was embraced by the surrealism group with great enthusiasm. Breton declared his work as "the first and only original surrealist object with a universal, provocative power." His name is Hans Bellmer. Before his visit to Paris, he had never been educated about art in his university. Bellmer was born in Kattowitz, Germany (now Katowice, Poland) in 1902. In 1923, obeying his father's requirement, Bellmer went to Berlin Technical College to study engineering. However, just one year later, Bellmer quit from the school, since he found

²⁰ Bate, David. *Photography and Surrealism: Sexuality, Colonialism and Social Dissent*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2004. P40.

²¹ Patrick, Bate. *Man Ray*. New York: Parkstone International, 2005. p37.

it was boring and how he loved art. What was well known was his photographs about dolls, which was regarded as a surrealist icon when those photographs were published in *Minotaure* in December 1934.

Bellmer's dolls have been controversial. For female or feminism, those dolls photographs are full of violence sadism and paedophilia. In the article 'Surrealism and sexuality', Xaviere Gauthier supposes that male surrealists used the distort and broken dolls' body as a way of recurring the castration anxiety which female encountered. In order to fight with this anxiety, males had to reform, distort even broken female body. Similarly, Rosalind Krauss sees Bellmer's dolls as representing the fear of castration and against Bellmer's work owing to the issue with accusations of misogyny.²²

Rudolf Kuenzli disagree with Krauss's perspective that surrealist photography presents the moment of deconstruction, the informe of gender categories:

*"Krauss, however, does not sense the slightest hint of misogyny in these distortions. For her they are simply an instance of the surrealist technique of defamiliarization called doubling, here via the distorting mirrors."*²³

In addition, Rudolf criticized that Krauss looks at these dolls from the male point of view, which leads her unable to recognize the obvious misogyny in these dolls' photographs:

*"Faced with the female figure, the male Surrealist fears castration, fears the dissolution of his ego. In order to overcome his fears, he fetishizes the female figure, he deforms, disfigures, manipulates her; he literally manhandles her in order to re-establish his own ego, and not his own informe."*²⁴

²² Rosalind E Krauss, et al. *L'amour Fou: Photography & Surrealism*. Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1985. 95. 8Lichtenstein (1991), 36.

²³ Kuenzli, Rudolf. *Surrealism and Women*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.p23.

²⁴ Lbid.p24.

Bellmer's dismembered, distorted body of young girl doll impressed the public with the atmosphere of death, sadism and eroticism, which brings heavy uncomfortable feelings. What were the reasons Bellmer created the dolls? Why did he stage the dolls and shoot photos? What played a role in Bellmer's unconscious?

Bellmer had a generous father. He believed that because his father forbade natural childish play, he lost a normal childhood. That obviously brought Bellmer childhood trauma. Interest in cross-dressing which means curious about being a woman and the early sexual interest in girls were absolutely unacceptable for an engineer father. In a letter to his friend Jelenski, Bellmer wrote: "I was born with a very pronounced need for a sense of well-being, for a carefree paradise without limits. But the limits took the form—for me—of the 'father' and (a little later) the 'police.' Beyond the warmth and comforting presence of my mother, there was a hostile, masculine authority: the enemy, the possessor of an arbitrary, external power."²⁵

Bellmer's behaviour could be seen as "rebellion, defence, attack" to his father. In 1936, Bellmer composed the essay "Der Vater" with his invectives.

"We learned early on to protect ourselves and, in truth, even more than that. What we thought of as we gnashed our teeth persisted all our waking hours: rebellion, defence, attack. He, on his side of the scales, had the heavy fat of a dead heart, the fat gut of the arriviste class; we had uncorrupted instinct, the infallible strategy of the untouched child. All the weapons to us were good; we learned to dissemble the profitable until it became scandalous and the scandalous to the point of pathetic timidity. We knew how to be every- thing: rubber, dirt or glass, wire, and copper. To tell the truth, we probably had a rather adorable air, more girlish than formidable as we would have preferred. But it seemed best above all to tempt the brute from his position in order to confuse him. We overtook him even with the little childish song at the moment when, before his

²⁵ Constantin Jelenski, "Hans Bellmer ou la douleur déplacée," in *Les Dessins de Hans Bellmer* (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1966), p4.

*unexpected presence, our pleasure abruptly ceased. In sadness, we had the hurtful mocking laughter of broken glass shards; in a night mist, the foreboding of acidulous irony; in simulated excitement, we vomited and defiled everything."*²⁶

Those humiliation and belittlement from Bellmer to his father would lead to unconscious guilt and fear of retaliation, which could produce conflict and anxiety. Freud told us that our mind protects us by repressing the anxiety and the conflict if we are bearing severe anxiety or mental anguish. During the repression, conflict would be pushed into our unconscious. Generally, infantile themes are closely related with the forbidden wish and the unconscious fear.²⁷

On the one hand, because of the infant son's desire of looking for mother to himself, oedipal conflict comes into the unconsciousness. On the other hand, oedipal conflict would cause the child's fear of castration in front of the stronger father. Usually, infantile wishes and fears could be repressed, although it can persistently haunt the whole life without expungement. In Bellmer's report to his biographer, he acknowledged that :

*"Yes, my dolls were the beginning. Obviously, there was a convulsive flavor to them because they reflected my anxiety and unhappiness. To an extent they represented an attempt to reject the horrors of adult life as it was in favor of a return to the wonder of childhood, but the eroticism was all-important, they became an erotic liberation for me."*²⁸

In the late 1920s, artistic freedom was gone with the collapse of the Weimar Republic. When the repressive Nazi regime rose up, they began to denounce modern art as "degenerate". As the rise of National Socialism, many artists' work and activity was banned and punished as the targets of violating public

²⁶ Bellmer, Hans. *The Father*. 1936.

²⁷ Taylor, Sue. *Hans Bellmer: The Anatomy of Anxiety*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002.P47.

²⁸ Bellmer quoted by Peter Webb, "Eroticism in Twentieth-century Art: Interviews with Contemporary Artists," in *The Erotic Arts* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975), 369–370.

morality. Under the strict censorship of modern art and artists, Bellmer created his first doll guardedly in his Berlin apartment in 1933. Bellmer knew how to survive under this situation. As he had the experience of being arrested for exhibiting gouaches by the government in Poland in 1922, and he escaped from imprisonment by bribing a bureaucrat. Finally, Bellmer crossed the border into Germany with false papers.

The first doll was fifty-six inches tall, consisting of wood, metal and plaster. The joints could move and the legs, head could be split easily in anytime. Sue Taylor believes there are three principal events that triggered Bellmer's invention of the doll at that time. First was Bellmer found a box of toys from his mother. Second was that he met Ursula Naguschewski and attended the performance of Jacques Offenbach's Tales of Hoffmann. Both events aroused his interest in childhood things and inspired him the idea of a life-size girl doll. Besides, Bellmer's mental and



Figure 20 Hans Bellmer – “Untitled” from The Doll, 1934

emotional state was affected by the sudden illness of his father in 1931 and the diagnosis of his wife's tuberculosis, which brought “anxiety and unhappiness” to his work. That means the present conditions triggered the similar memories of past psychic traumas that became the content of his art throughout his career.²⁹

Bellmer was influenced by dada artists quite a lot, which brought dada style into his work including the doll. When Bellmer move to Berlin, he befriended avant-garde artists such as John Heartfield, Rudolf Schlichter and George Grosz. Otto Dix, George Grosz and other dada artists tried painting and collage about dolls and machine. Lotte Pritzel and Hannah Höch created DaDa dolls, and Oskar Kokoschka used wax to replicate his wife and got his infamous doll.

²⁹ Taylor, Sue. *Hans Bellmer: The Anatomy of Anxiety*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002.p59.

In 1934, Bellmer published a booklet titled "Di Puppe" which contained a series of black and white photographs of being dismembered doll. In Surrealist Manifesto, Breton reclaimed that words should be cut up and rearranged. The doll's body was the response from Bellmer. Most of the photographs were shot indoor with soft light. The doll was a little girl which it revealed Bellmer's infantile feelings. The head which was separated from the body, and the opened skin with digestive organs were related to violence, reflecting Bellmer's psychological trauma. In the accompanying essay in *Die Puppe*, "Memories of the Doll Theme", Bellmer described the doll as "the young maidens with their large averted eyes". In "figure 20", the doll was installed in a room, the bright light shines in from the left side of the picture, the doll's back is facing the camera, head and legs are leaning against the wall, and shadow of the whole body is cast on the wall. Without arms, the left leg is unwrapped, exposed metal. The upper body was wearing a light sling vest, the lower body was naked and buttocks were cocked up. The doll's head is twisted back to face the audience, a strand of long hair falls from her shoulder, a shy but provocative gaze at the audience, and charming lips make Bellmer's doll look like a real girl. With broken body, long hair and tempting eyes, it is easy to connect the doll to the object of sex and sadistic thoughts. Interesting thing is that the doll's eyes make the audience themselves the object to be gazed at, and the doll becomes the subject of gazing and guilt instigator. No doubt, as Taylor concluded that Bellmer conjures precocious little girls as instruments in his "erotic liberation".³⁰

In the late 1935 or early 1936, Bellmer sent dozens of the photographs of his second doll to Breton, Eluard, Parisot and Valancay. Then those photographs appeared in *Minotaure*. Moreover, they were published in one issue of *Cabier's d'Art* which talked about surrealist objects.³¹ The photographs of the second doll are different from the first series significantly. More sinister and narrative mood could be found in the second

³⁰ Taylor, Sue. *Hans Bellmer: The Anatomy of Anxiety*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002.p29.

³¹ Webb and Short, *Hans Bellmer*.p62.

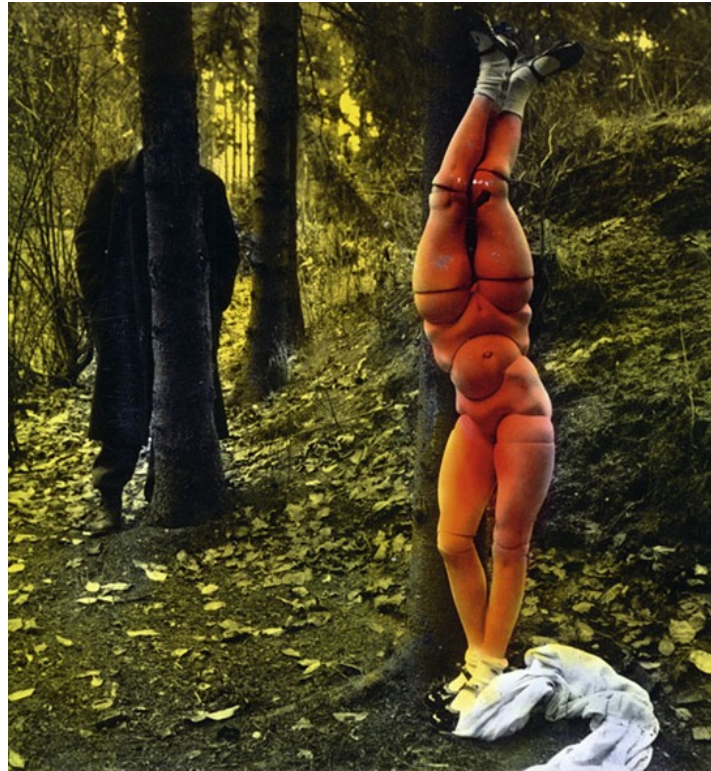


Figure 21 Hans Bellmer, *The Doll*, 1935, hand-colored black-and-white photograph

series. The second doll looks more realistic and fleshier. Compared with the only indoor staging of the first doll, Bellmer staged the doll in parks and gardens as well. In some photographs, it's hard to make sense if the doll was a little girl or a lady, since there were only four legs connected with body. Bellmer played the doll with "sinister games"—the doll was tied up, hung on a tree, dumped on a stairway. Besides, Bellmer began to hand-color those doll's photographs with faint yellow, green or red delicately, referencing some picture postcards and erotica according to nineteenth century. The scene of trees and forests appears many times in Bellmer's photographs. The stage in "figure 21" is set in a forest, and the fallen leaves add a lonely atmosphere to these photos. Yellowish color of the forest made the whole atmosphere look eerie and uneasy. With the abdomen as its axis, the doll has two lower limbs spliced together, standing against a tree. Seams at the joint look as if they were tied up by a rope. The naked vulva attests to the woman's body with plump hips and thighs. At first glance, it is not entirely certain whether it is a little girl or an adult woman. The white socks and small leather shoes on the four feet seem to tell the audience that they come from the body of a young girl. A piece of white drapery was

scattered at the doll's feet, and the naked red body seemed to be heating up in a contrapposto pose. It's like a sexual provocation to seduce a man. A noteworthy detail is that in the background, a tall man's body stands hidden behind a tree, we as audience are unable to see his face. With a long dark coat and boots, the potential perpetrator seems to be spying on the doll. The whole picture is a morbid fairy tale full of dangerous sexual desires.

There was an event that he met two sixteenth century articulated wooden dolls at Friedrich Museum, which influenced him about the development of the second doll. Bellmer began to work on the second doll in 1934. In that years, Nazi party was observing and regulating the cultural activity of the Reich with "microscopic attention". Joseph Goebbels' Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda established "horror chambers of art", ridiculing modern art. The National Socialist was persecuting avant-garde artists. Meanwhile, his wife's condition of illness was failing. Under that circumstances, Bellmer created his second doll. The bounded and fragmentary female doll was a stark contrast to the Nazi ideal of the Aryan icon. To some extent, those doll's photographs were surreal against society's value in these years.

In the photographs of the second doll, objects of the body were lost, while, Bellmer set an axis and displaced body parts in unorthodox positions. In the book "Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious, or The Anatomy of the Image", Bellmer expressed his perspective:

"We may also ask ourselves if the false identity established between arm and leg, sex and armpit, eye and hand, nose and heel, would not be reciprocal. In this case, we would want to depict it as a reversible axis between the real and virtual centers of an excitation, an axis that would plot its course here and there, even in the sphere of metric anatomy, and which, given the oppositional affinity between breasts and buttocks, for example, and the mouth and the sex, would run horizontally at the level of the navel."

*Note: The familiar movement of swelling the chest and hollowing out the back to emphasize the breasts is naturally accompanied by an analogous movement on the lower half of the torso, which becomes emphasized as a counterweight and is, if we can put it this way, the lower breasts."*³²

The lost objects from the doll fully presented Bellmer's castration, as he unconsciously regarded the doll as a phallic substitute. Freud describes the fetish as "a token of triumph over the threat of castration".³³ Assembling and disassembling dolls could satisfy Bellmer's anatomy of desire. The pleasure he would feel is arguably even more than sex practice:

*"Once the woman is on the same level with her experimental vocation, accessible to its permutations, to its algebraic possibilities, capable of giving in to transubstantial whims, once she is extensible and collapsible on the epidermis and joints preserved from the natural inconveniences of assembly and disassembly-this will provide us far better and definitive information on the anatomy of desire than the practice of lovemaking."*³⁴

The doll was variously bound, hanged on a hook, tied to a tree by ropes in a clandestine, malevolent environment. The aftermath of beating and abuse is striking. Bellmer described perpetrator as "criminal craftsman" who could abolish the wall between the woman and her image:

"To obtain objective proof, we will consequently have recourse to the criminal craftsman through the most humanely sensorial and most beautiful passion, that of abolishing the wall separating the woman from her image. According to the memory I have accurately retained of a certain photographic document, a man, to transform his victim, had tightly bound her thighs, shoulders, and breasts with crisscrossed wire haphazardly causing bulges of flesh, irregular spherical triangles, stretching into folds,

³² Bellmer, Hans. *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious: Or the Anatomy of the Image*. 2004.p13.

³³ Freud, Sigmund. "Fetishism (1927)." *PsycEXTRA Dataset*, 1971. doi:10.1037/e417472005-557.p154.

³⁴ Bellmer, Hans. *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious: Or the Anatomy of the Image*. 2004.p32.

unsavory lips, multiplying never before seen breasts in outrageous locations." ³⁵

In the essay "*A Child Is Being Beaten*", Freud described that the source of fantasy of consciously child abuse comes from father's repression for incestuous attraction. Due to the forbidden desire, unconscious sense of guilt would be produced. As a result, those who have the fantasies of child abuse would exhibit masochistic behaviours. ³⁶ Bellmer projected his "anxiety and unhappy", desire and trauma on the dolls in a violent and distorted way. Therefore, we saw the castration, sadism, fetishism and anti-father behind the disassembled and abused dolls. Through photography, Bellmer gazed on his behaviours and examined himself. He advanced the doll and updated the stage for constant deep exploration of his own inner world. I believe that, thanks to his rational thinking, Bellmer unconsciously cured himself in the process, and he neither hurt himself nor assaulted others. By projecting his feeling of self-harm and inflicting it on an inanimate doll might have prevented him from manifesting it on to other dangerous forms.

In the first chapter, I discussed unconscious images from the photographers who concentrated on others' internal world. Compared with those photographers who explored unconsciousness, surrealism photographers not only consistently invented new techniques for more means of expressing unconsciousness, but also embraced Freudian theory which was the advanced psychological theory in those years. Diamond was limited by the guidance of physiognomy, and Mumler was addicted to multiple exposure technique, while surrealism photography combined techniques of psychological theory and literature so well. Even though the movement of surrealism had been over, surrealism photography hasn't stopped. It affected contemporary photography a lot and permeated into oriental culture from the western art. In the next chapter, we will discuss what new

³⁵ Bellmer, Hans. *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious: Or the Anatomy of the Image*. 2004.p32.

³⁶ Freud, Sigmund. *A Child is Being Beaten*. n.d.p177–204.

chemical reaction was produced when surrealism photography was spread into oriental environment and culture.

Chapter 3. Surrealism photography in Oriental culture



Figure 22 Masahisa Fukase Untitled (self-portrait with needles) 1983

The acceptance process of surrealism which based on western culture was full of conflict in Oriental culture.

In the 1920s, Japanese poets, critics and artists introduced surrealism to Japan. Some of them such as Nishiwaki Junzaburo who studied at University of Oxford from 1923 to 1925, and Fukuzawa Ichiro who studied art in French from 1924-1931, had the background of living and studying in Europe.³⁷ Since then, surrealism was widespread into Japan and later China.

What was the unconscious figure of Oriental culture in Western world? During the colony years, European inhabitants used to regard Eastern culture as a sort of existence of an imaginary Orient, as they knew Orient through merchandise such tea, silk, spice and porcelain rather than through a direct contact and communication. As a result, the imaginary Oriental

³⁷ Wu, Chinghsin. "Reality Within and Without: Surrealism in Japan and China in the Early 1930s." *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 26, no. 1 (2016), 189-208. doi:10.1353/roj.2016.0010.p189.

culture was related to the forms of pleasure, eroticism and leisure.³⁸ In 20th century, the clash between East and West had been presented in Man Ray's photography "Le Violon d'Ingres". A western female body, dressed in an oriental turban, silk and marked western musical notes on her back, are waiting to be played. Man Ray used this sexual joke to critique European culture and society.³⁹ Meanwhile, 'Orient myth' was attractive to the surrealists.⁴⁰

In front of western culture and art, the reaction from East Asia was contradictory. When surrealism was brought into Japan, it was not accepted entirely. On the one hand, in the early nineteenth century, although Japanese artists had the desire to integrate themselves into global artistic modernism by embracing Western modern art trends, nationalism with emerging anti-Western and even anti-modernist was increasing in Japan. In other words, about surrealism, Japanese and Chinese believed that Asian artists could produce the surrealism that could not only match the highest standards of Western theorists, but also be superior to or surpassed that of Westerners.⁴¹ On the other hand, due to the translation issues, some parts, even crucial parts of the ideas and theories of Breton's surrealism were lost in the 1920s.⁴² Because of those factors which are discussed above, East Asian artists developed Western art trends more individualistically and idiosyncratically within the local, regional and world society.⁴³

That is the soil for the growth of surrealism photography in Oriental culture. And then, what would happen there with contemporary photography? In the following part, I would like to introduce several photographers who could help understand the interior reality of those photographers based in the Oriental culture.

³⁸ Bate, David. *Photography and Surrealism: Sexuality, Colonialism and Social Dissent*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2004.p127.

³⁹ *Lbid.*,p124

⁴⁰ *Lbid.*,p143.

⁴¹ Wu, Chinghsin. "Reality Within and Without: Surrealism in Japan and China in the Early 1930s." *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 26, no. 1 (2016), 189-208. doi:10.1353/roj.2016.0010.p189

⁴² *Lbid.*,p191

⁴³ *Lbid.*,p205

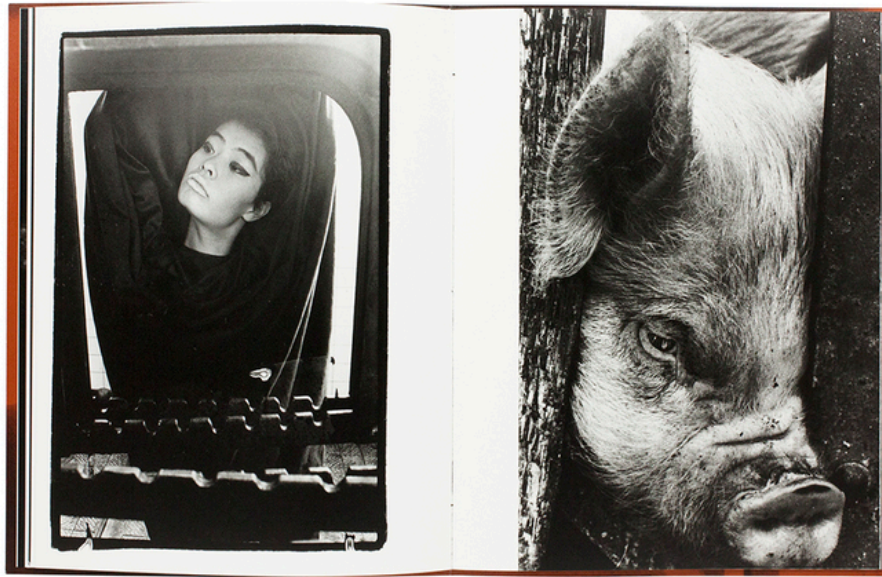


Figure 23 Untitled from the Book: Masahisa Fukase YUGI (Homo Ludence). Chuo Koronsha, 1971.

The Second World War which lasted for almost 15 years long ended by the accepted defeat of Japan. From ever ambitiousness to unconditional surrender, the Japanese society fell into a self-reexamination stage. It took a long time to recover during the postwar period, while photography recovered quickly after the publication limitation and the shortage of film and photographic paper in war times. The hunger for expression and creation needed to be satisfied urgently. Even though the war had been over, the American atomic bombs left a deep scar in Japanese inhabitants' hearts, which was a memory of death and part for ever at one moment. Owing to the rapid economic growth in the 1970s, Japan's society, economy and culture stood in the turning point, and photographers began to reexamine the foundations of the postwar world. The multiple factors triggered the appearance of a personal photography: intimate descriptions of daily life the photographers imbued with a decidedly private vision.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Tucker, Anne, Kōtarō Iizawa, Dana Friis-Hansen, Kaneko Ryuichi, Naoyuki Kinoshita, Takeba Joe, Museum of Fine Arts; Houston, and Kokusai K. Staff. *The History of Japanese Photography*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003. p210.

In 1961 Tokyo, an exhibition named "Kill the pigs" attracted the attention of the Tokyo small photographic community. One part of the pictures was about the Shibaura slaughterhouse in Tokyo, and another part was about the nude of his lover Kawakami Yukiyo. What was really striking was the image of a stillborn child. The photographer was Masahisa Fukase who was born in the town of Hokkaido, Japan, in 1934. His family had been running the local photo studio for three generations. Hence , Fukase knew how to take photos when he was a little child. While Fukase didn't go back to his hometown to replace his father's business when he graduated from the Nihon University College of Art's Photography Department in 1956. He decided to stay in Tokyo for his own photographic expression. The exhibition was full of gruesome images of death and erotic close-ups intertwined male and female nude. Fukase presented his curiosity about death and infatuation about sex without any conceals on photography. Fukase applied the method of surrealist montage to show the connection between love and death in his view. In 1962 Fukase declared that he was interested in surrealism and admired the surrealist photography of Man Ray.⁴⁵ From this exhibition, Fukase started his artistic career.



Figure 24 From Window by Masahisa Fukase 1974

After Yukiyo left him and took their child from him as well, he met Wanibe Yoko in 1963 and married in the following year. Fukase's lens focused on

⁴⁵ Fukase Masahisa, 'Iyaho'n' [Earphone], CM, 1962:7, 131.

Yoko and published a book *Homo Ludence* in 1971, which brought him fame in the field of photography art. Moreover, he got the opportunity to hold an exhibition at MoMA in 1974. However, it was a long time Fukase suffered from a narcissistic personality disorder. Apart from alcohol, he regarded his sexual partners as the external suppliers of self-esteem and self-cohesiveness. What's more, due to the unbearable long-term stare from Fukase's camera, their relationship began to disintegrate. As Fukase knew Yoko would leave him, they set a time of one year for living together. There was half a month in that year, Fukase said goodbye to Yoko from the window when she went to work and took a photo to record Yoko's dress up. Fukase understood that their love was dying, and the only thing what he could do was to face the process of death through photography.



Figure 25 Masahisa Fukase, from *Ravens*, 1986

Yoko and Fukase divorced in 1976. Without Yoko, Fukase lost his soul and dropped into depression. On the way back to his hometown, he found ravens. He began to be curious about ravens and observe the behaviours of those birds. When he lost Yoko, ravens became his new subject. Fukase pursued the trail of ravens to several places including Hokkaido, Kanazawa

and Tokyo, and then Fukase spent 6 years photographing ravens. He projected himself on the ravens by which expressed his loneliness, boredom,

self-hatred and sorrow. Moreover, it reflects that Fukase engaged with the 'personal' photography movement deeply, and experienced with means of self-expression and self-representation in narrative photography when he confronted a profound and debilitating melancholia which arose from 'madness'.⁴⁶ The common concept of 'madness' is clinically defined as psychosis.⁴⁷ In the psychotic, 'the unconscious is at the surface, conscious'.⁴⁸ The psychotic is inhabited, possessed, by language.⁴⁹ It is obvious that Fukase was swallowed by photography.

When Fukase finished ravens, he turned his lens to cats. His mood was cured a little. The cats from his pictures were scared as well as arrogant with a resistant attitude to life, while all the elements looked so cute. Fukase used a dramatic and fantastic cat life to resolve his misfortune. However, the news of the subside of his bosom friend Shoji Yamagishi pushed him into the whirlpool of darkness again.

In the 1980s, Fukase went back to hometown and continued the series of family projects. We could find that in the first part of the 1970s, the family had a happy and energetic atmosphere, however, in the second part of 1985-1989, it went on a heavy road owing to the family members' death and separation. The last picture contained Fukase, his brother, his mother posing with a commemorative portrait of his father, which was taken just as the Fukase Photographic Studio was about to be closed down after 80 years of business. Fukase recorded his family's growth and fading by his camera.

⁴⁶ Charrier, Philip. "'Becoming a Raven': Self-Representation, Narration, and Metaphor in Fukase Masahisa's 'Karasu' Photographs." *Japanese Studies* 29, no. 2 (2009), 209-234. doi:10.1080/10371390903029135. p212.

⁴⁷ Jacques Lacan, *The Psychoses*, Book III 1955–1956, trans. Russell Grigg (London: Routledge, 1993), p.4.

⁴⁸ Bate, David. *Photography and Surrealism: Sexuality, Colonialism and Social Dissent*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2004.p103.

⁴⁹ Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. London: Tavistock, 1987.p100.



Figure 26 Masahisa Fukase, from the series Family, 1971-89

Having experienced the death of his child in 1961, the death of his love with Yoko in 1976, the death of his father in 1987, Fukase began to face his own death. 'Bukubuku' was the last project when he was alive. One day in 1992, Fukase fell from the stairs after being drunk, which was the third time a drunken fall happened to him at the same place. However, in the third time, his brain contused severely and lost speech and memory function. Fukase used to lie on the hospital bed till his death in 2012, as he had no adaptive skills to live independently or hold employment any more.

Fukase used a sort of fiction that combines 'everyday life' and 'extraordinary' life as the method of self-exploration. Just like the psychologist C.G Jung who used yoga, drawing and writing to explore himself and rescued himself with a masterwork 'Liber Novus'. Unfortunately, Fukase could not save himself by his works.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, many Chinese young artists came to Japan for travelling and studying art by which they got the opportunity of touching surrealism and other modern art trends happened in the context of Japan's reception of these new movements, thus surrealism was spread



Figure 27 Untitled, 2012 © Ren Hang.
Courtesy Estate of Ren Hang and
Stieglitz 19, Antwerpen



Figure 28 Untitled, 2015 © Ren Hang .
Courtesy Estate of Ren Hang and
OstLicht, Galerie für Fotografie, Wien

to China. Several years later, an institute named CIAA (Chinese Independent Art Association) was established by a group of young artists who studied in Japan, which absorbed the practices and theories of Japanese surrealism and fauvism.⁵⁰ Entering 21st century, Chinese contemporary photography adopted art trends and practices from other countries under the rapid economic development, especially the 'personal photography' from Japan. Some publishers, institutes and galleries introduced Japanese photographers who are the same generations as Fukase to China. For instance, books from Daido Moriyama, Nobuyoshi Araki and Takuma Nakahira were translated and published in China owing to the success of Japanese photography in the global stage , and institutes like 'Three Shadows Photography Art Centre' has been promoting Japanese photographers more than ten years in China. The style of Japanese personal photography influenced Chinese young photographers strongly, whereas it conflicts with Chinese social environment because of the distinction between Japan and China.

⁵⁰ Wu, Chinghsin. "Reality Within and Without: Surrealism in Japan and China in the Early 1930s." *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 26, no. 1 (2016), 189-208.
doi:10.1353/roj.2016.0010.p198.



Figure 29 Ren Hang, Portrait Plant, 2014 Courtesy Stieglitz19 and Ren Hang Estate

One day in February 2017, a young Chinese photographer, Ren Hang, decided to end his life, jumping from a building in Beijing when he was just 29 years old, although he had got some achievements in the field of photographic art that could be seen as success. His works had been exhibited in China and several European countries including Norway, Denmark and Austria. He received the Third Terna Contemporary Art Award and then published several photo books.

In Ren's works, naked body and genitals are the main elements that are played and arranged as if playing toys. Sexual repression is obvious in Ren's images, which on the one hand was contributed from the Chinese traditional culture of Confucianism, and on the other hand from the actual social principle and law. That means the topics about sex and nude are forbidden in public. However, Japanese personal photography influenced Chinese young photographers deeply, and brought a new way of self-expression. In an interview, Ren mentioned that he likes to be inspired by works from Shuji Terayama and Nobuyoshi Araki.⁵¹ Ren reclaimed that when a person

⁵¹ *I'VE GOT A LITTLE PROBLEM*. Directed by Ximing Zhang. 2017. China: Parallax Films, DVD.

come to the world, she/he is naked, so nude is nature and normal condition.⁵² The hidden unconscious message is probably that he wishes the society could accept homosexuality as natural and normal phenomena, since his self-identity belongs to LGBT. However, it conflicts with nature to some extent, as he said "I am afraid of being infected by disease, but also afraid of being not infected".⁵³

Ren constructed a game-like world which related to his interior reality, in where it is out of touch from the real world and there are no any limitations and taboos about sexuality and nude. Ren simplifies the human body as an abstract form with unexpected compositions and perspectives. We can feel painfully provocative, or dreamy and surreal from his photographs. In his visual vocabulary, abstraction, surrealism, dada and historical photography are adopted synthetically.⁵⁴ Whereas, his game-like world contradicts the real world where he lives in. This contradiction is expressed in the connection with the real world which is inevitable whenever he would choose to simultaneously shoot and exhibit his photographs. Freud described games as the of withdrawing from the pressure of critical reason.

"Whatever the motive may have been which led the child to begin these games, I believe that in his later development he gives himself up to them with the consciousness that they are nonsensical, and that he finds enjoyment in the attraction of what is forbidden by reason. He now uses games in order to withdraw from the pressure of critical reason. But there is far more potency in the restrictions which must establish themselves in the course of a child's education in logical thinking and in distinguishing between what is true and false in reality; and for this reason, the rebellion against the compulsion of logic and reality is deep-going and long-lasting. Even the phenomena of imaginative activity must be included in this category. The power of criticism has increased so greatly in the later part

⁵² Lbid.

⁵³ Lbid.

⁵⁴ "C/O Berlin | »Love, Ren Hang« • PiB – Photography in Berlin." PiB –Photography in Berlin. Last modified March 2, 2020. <https://www.photography-in.berlin/co-berlin-love-ren-hang/>.

of childhood and in the period of learning which extends over puberty that the pleasure in 'liberated nonsense' only seldom dares to show itself directly."⁵⁵

Ren's visual language could be regarded as a sort of 'liberated nonsense'. While this nonsense also contained Oriental aesthetics including the appearance of the animals: butterfly, peacock, pigeon, fish and so on. Similarly, Fukase regarded pigs, cats and ravens as his subject. The reason probably comes from the Oriental painting in which animal is one of the three general themes. Ren mixed the traditional aesthetic into his absurd games, by which he developed the unconscious workings of pleasure in the 'nonsense'.

Initially, under the western culture, surrealists used rationality to investigate the irrational phenomena.⁵⁶ But Fukase and Ren represented their unconsciousness irrationally, as in the Oriental context, rational thinking had never been leading position.

In February 2017, Maison Européenne de la Photographie held a great retrospective exhibition for a photographer in Paris. This was the first time the museum held a solo exhibition for a Chinese artist. His name is Gao Bo.

Bo was born into a working family in China in 1964. He went to the capital Beijing to study in 1983 and graduated from the Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University in 1987. But he did not look for a job after graduation. Such a group of young people who have no job was called 'blind flow' at that time, which means living without purpose. In the social environment at that time, college students would be assigned relevant positions to work after graduation. However, Bo did not choose this regular path, but rushed to freedom. As soon as he graduated, he went to Tibet to take photos. This

⁵⁵ Freud, Sigmund. *The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious*. London: Penguin UK, 2002.p103.

⁵⁶ Bate, David. *Photography and Surrealism: Sexuality, Colonialism and Social Dissent*. London: I.B.Tauris, 2004.p20.

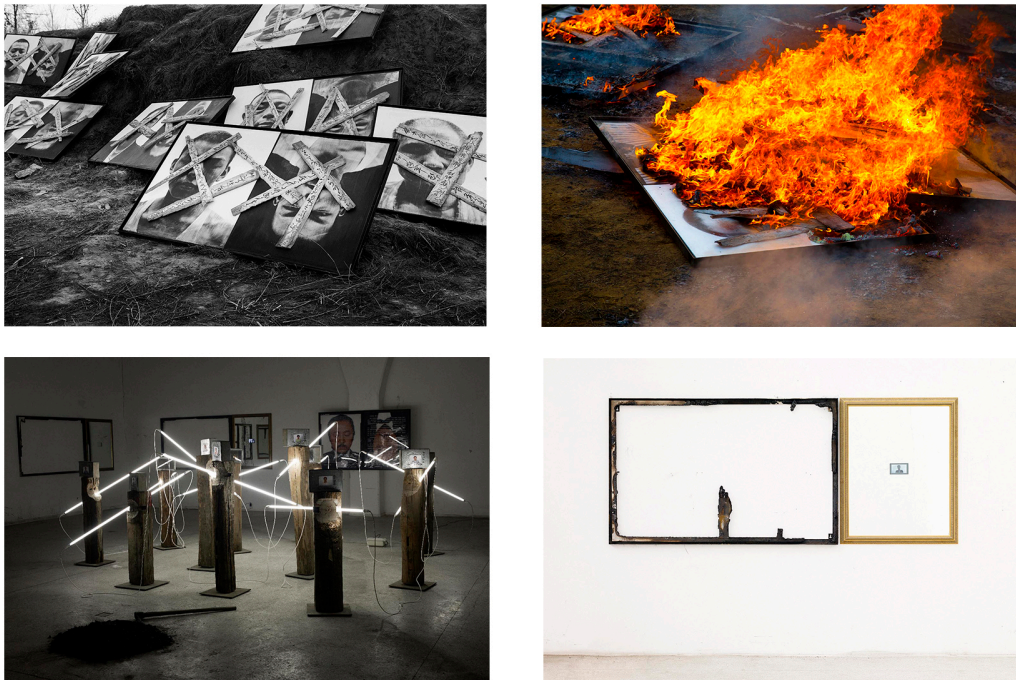


Figure 30 The performance and installation of "The Figure Dies Away I – II" 2000-2015

series occupies a very important position in his career and has been going on for many years. Many years later, he went to Tibet for artistic creation. In an interview he explained the reason why he went to Tibet after graduation: "I was looking for poetic quality. I was looking for a place where I can gallop with any limitation".⁵⁷

From 1990 to 1995, Bo lived in France and worked with Agence VU and Galerie VU. Since then, great changes had taken place in Bo's creative concept. Bo began to ask himself questions and gradually walked into the deep world of his psychic reality. Observing Gao Bo's works, it seems that he had been thinking about the topic of death. In my opinion, an important part of the reason comes from his childhood trauma.

In the project of "The Figure Dies Away I-II", Bo took a series of portraits of those on death row at the prison. Each prisoner was photographed with both of black and white backgrounds. For the white background, the prisoner closes his eyes, and for the black background, the prisoner opens

⁵⁷ Wen, Sheng. "'Gao Bo LES OFFRANDES', A Farewell Node." *Photoworld*, September 2017.p83.

his eyes. He used darkroom technology to print the photos on linen cloth and framed it in a black frame. He wrote illegible words on painted strips of wood in black ink and nailed them to the photos so that the portraits looked as if they had been blocked. The portraits were taken to a batch of open land for centralized burning. After that, he collected the ashes into metal boxes and affixed them with archive photos provided by the police station with prisoners' names. After the completion of this act, at the scene of the exhibition, these metal boxes containing ashes were installed on wooden stakes with tube lamps. Besides, those empty picture frames were hung on the wall after being burned.

It's like a funeral ceremony, or some form of religious rites. It carries the prayer of Bo and the sigh for the disappearance of life. The blank picture frame represents that life has disappeared, and the wooden stake illuminated by the light may be Bo's hope for reincarnation of life. The words on wooden strips are like symbols of civilization. Here Bo questioned civilization. What was burned together with the photos was a symbol of civilization. The lives imprisoned by civilization which reflects the contradiction between them. Bo once confided his heart and recalled memories of his childhood :

"there are always two or three times a year. I remember I was eight or nine years old at that time. As soon as I heard that the prisoner was going to be shot again, I was very excited and wanted to watch it from beginning to end. I ran behind the prisoner truck. I really like to see a bullet in the prisoner's head and brain spill. I try to get close to the body. After a while, the big green flies began to fly on me, which made me think of vomiting. But it doesn't matter, because excitement has transcended and triumphed over disgust." ⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Wang, Luqing. Not about Nationality but about Imagination: Gao Bo's retrospective exhibition in Maison Européenne de la Photographie. n.d.
<https://www.tanchinese.com/archives/news/26320>.



Figure 31 The performance and installation of "Requiems" 2011-2015

In another series project "Requiem", Bo released the soul of his mother who had died when he was just a child, from purgatory.

In "Requiem I", the photos of trees were enlarged on the linen and continued to be smeared with ink, charcoal and ashes. Blood-stained medical bandages are tied to white painted branches, which were then fixed to the surface of the photo. Prayers were written on the surface in Sanskrit, Arabic and Latin. In "Requiem-IV / The immensity of Death", two tracks run through the whole space, Bo was bandaged and tied to the tree trunk, lying on the tracks. A lamb stood beside him. At the age of eight, his mother died by suicide on the tracks. Bo recalled the last scene when he saw his mother. "she was lying there, her incomplete body wrapped in gauze, reassembled before being confined."⁵⁹ Bo used this series of works to express the pain in the bottom of his heart. It was almost a reappearance of his mother's accident, and the lamb was a substitute for himself who witnessed the whole event.

At the most prominent entrance to the exhibition in Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Bo stacked portraits of a thousand stones. These stones were not ordinary pebbles, they were a kind of Tibetan Buddhist scripture stone called "marniy stones", which was specially brought by Bo from Tibet. The stones were coated with photosensitive gelatin, and Bo enlarged the portraits of people on the stones in his darkroom and took them to the exhibition in Paris.

⁵⁹ Lbid.



Figure 32 The performance of " Duality Portraits" 2017

One thousand pebbles are piled up disorderly like a thousand lives, which makes the audience feel that life is so fragile that it can be trampled and forgotten at will. Bo projected his subconscious sense of crisis about death into this work. Perhaps it is the experience of witnessing death in childhood that causes the phenomenon of disappearance or death to appear repeatedly in Bo's works. Although death is frightening, in Bo's works he has been discussing the topic of facing disappearance or death directly. There is a possibility that witnessing and experiencing death so closely in his childhood, brought him anxiety about death.

In Bo's subconscious, he may have always had a desire for his mother to be reborn. It may also be one of the reasons why he went to Tibet many times to create works. Since Buddhism believes in reincarnation, which is in line with his spiritual aspirations. After completing the exhibition, Bo brought the stones back to Tibet to ease his anxiety in artistic practice.

On the opening day of the exhibition, Bo covered the photographs of the project "Duality Portraits" with black and white ink. The photographs presented in the form of double quadriptychs. On the left is the front portrait,

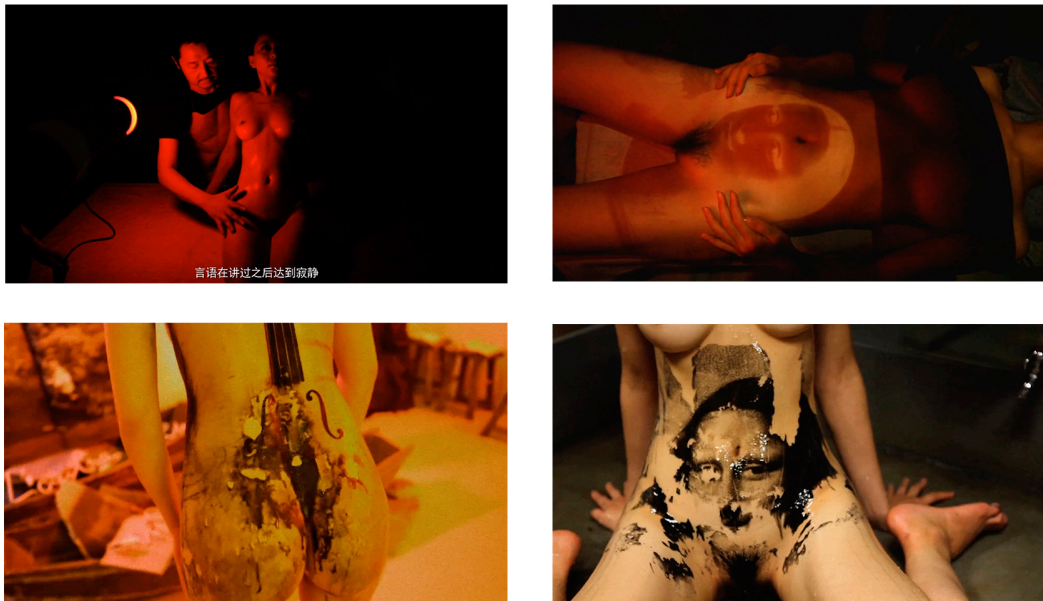


Figure 33 Screenshots from the documentary video of the performance "Trial For a Performative Artwork N°1, 2011"

because the character is wearing a mask, the audience could not see other facial expressions, can only see the staring eyes. On the right is a photo of an inverted mask. In this way, the two photos are placed together. The left portrait represents reality and the present, and the right mask represents the soul and another time and space. The red neon tube flashing in the middle is a sign of danger, but it is also a religious prayer. When viewers see black-and-white ink covering the surface of the image, the viewers could feel that the image has disappeared, but as time goes on, the ink slowly slips off the pre-coated resin surface, and the vision message will make viewers realize that the image has appeared again. In this way, the image was experiencing the cycle of destruction and rebirth. But it's all just a visual illusion. Through this project, Bo was shaping his inner desires and delusions. Maybe he was wondering whether death is just an illusion? Or is reincarnation an illusion?

After years of living in France and coming into contact with completely different cultural and artistic environments, Bo began to explore artistic language.

In the project "Trial For a Performative Artwork N°1, 2011", he recorded the whole behavior on video and explained the deep meaning in poetry. In the dim red darkroom light, Bo smeared the photosensitive gelatin on the naked female body with his hands. First from the shoulder to the back, then to the buttocks. Then the front chest and abdomen. Waited until the gelatin was slightly dry and the body was placed under an enlarger. An image of a violin was projected onto the back of the human body. After the exposure, the body turned over facing the enlarger, and the image of the Mona Lisa was projected onto the human body. After the exposure, Bo began to spray developer and fixer on the human body. The image began to appear. When the image was completely clear, they went to another bright space for photo recording.

The portrait of the Mona Lisa, which appears on the abdomen of the female body, was added a beard to the Mona Lisa's chin by the pubes. This is obviously inspired by Duchamp's work "L.H.O.O.Q"(1919). The violin image on the back of the female body was obviously inspired by Man Ray's "Le Violon d'Ingres".

Finally, the human body with the image sits in the pool, and Bo began to clean the images by hands and water. Under the scouring of the water, the image on the body began to become dilapidated and finally disappeared. And then the same process is repeated again.

At the end of the video, Bo printed an image of the Mona Lisa on his arm in a similar way, which seems to show that he was clear that Western art and language had been imprinted in his language system.

While, in the face of the western environment which had a great impact on their own creation, Bo was not completely passive acceptance. Just like those Japanese artists' attitude towards surrealism, Bo began to think and try to refine his own artistic language. The performance was the way how Bo spoke with Duchamp and Man Ray. From this poem synchronized with the video, we can see more of Bo's thinking:

*"Language and music can only be carried out in time.
Only the living can have death.
The words are silent after they have been spoken.
Only with the help of form, with the help of patterns, words or music can
achieve stillness.*

*Like a still Chinese vase, moving permanently in its stillness.
When the music continues, the violin does not stand still, not only that, but
interdependent, or the end precedes the beginning, the end and the
beginning are often there, before the beginning ends.
It all started now.
Language takes on too much and cracks under the heavy load.
Sometimes it is all broken and loosens, slides and disappears when it is
tight.*

*I'm right here, in the middle of the journey.
Most of my wasted years, in the midst of frenzied years, still try to learn to
use video language.
Every attempt is a fresh start and a failure of a different nature.
Therefore, every time a new adventure begins in a vague feeling, it is a new
beginning.
Disorganized emotions attack the unspeakable, to find what has been lost.
Once you find it and lose it again, look for it again and again, over and over
again.*

The end is my beginning."⁶⁰

After a long term reading and thinking, in 2011, Bo initiated "Laostism", a philosophical and aesthetic concept, which permeates his total artworks (Laostism and Laostist are derived from Lost, Loser and Lao tse. Lao tse in spoken Chinese is 'me'. 'Lost' in Chinese phonetic translation is 'luosi', meaning 'naked thinking'). In the end of the short documentary video

⁶⁰ BoStudio, "Trial For a Performative Artwork N°1, 2011." Vimeo. n.d.
<https://vimeo.com/user83947653>.

“Eternity of Being Lost” , Bo attached a paragraph of text, which is like a manifesto:

*"They have chosen the Truth and the way,
I have chosen to seek the truth in Truth, to all truth and falsehood to coexist.
To choose to be lost is more important than being lost,
Because you are already ahead of the way.
Being lost is our way.
Thus spoken Laotist.*

*They have chosen ethics and beliefs,
I have chosen thrills and the desire for pain.
I am happy; this is a reason.
I suffer; this is a reason.
To choose to desire is more important than desire, because you are desire.
Pain is my thrill.
Thus spoken Laotist*

*They choose to be hostage to thought and slave to rationality,
I have chosen to regard Thought as hegemony, as being in the same field
as feeling.
Feeling is King, Feeling is God, Feeling is temple,
Feeling is Mother, Feeling is Father, Feeling is the homeland.
To choose feeling is more than feeling.
Feeling is my world
Thus spoken Laotist*

*We break free from sin and defect. Being lost gives us freedom and new
life.
This is the creation of real people.
Thus spoken Laotist.*⁶¹

⁶¹ BoStudio, “Arts Eternity of Being Lost.” Vimeo. n.d. <https://vimeo.com/user83947653>.

Apart from the project "Trial For a Performative Artwork N°1, 2011", Bo used Man Ray's "Le Violon d'Ingres" for reference again in the project "Micro-Polyphony". By this project, Bo commemorated a friend who had died of cancer. The violin which was bound by neon tubes means the body undergoing laser chemotherapy. In the process of contact with western art, it can be said that surrealism guides him to the direction of exploring his psychic reality, and contemporary art gives the vision and courage to break the limitations of expression. Although Bo embraced surrealism and contemporary art, he didn't imitate without thinking. Bo's point of view and attitude towards life and nature were built based on oriental thoughts. He related his work to oriental art and philosophy, using materials from nature and culture including branches, stones, Chinese ink and calligraphy. From the manifesto of "Laostism", we can understand that Bo put "Feeling" on his most important position rather than being the "slave to rationality". Both of the artists were influenced by surrealism, but Bo is different from Ren. Bo had no intermediate medium of influence like Japan, since he was exposed to the western art environment directly. Undoubtedly, the arrival of surrealism opened the door of exploration of psychic reality for those East Asian photographers. Meanwhile, the oriental culture effects on the acceptance of surrealism and these artists' practice. In other words, it's a collision between rationality and irrationality.

Conclusion

From the middle of 19th century to the contemporary, this thesis examines those typical photographers whose works relate to the unconscious intimately. During the process of developing photography from a tool to be characteristic of personal language, there are several key factors. Firstly, it is the advancement of technology. The innovation of calotype motivated Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond to document the psychological reaction and mental illness by photography. Mumler began his spirit photographer career thanks to the occasional development of multiple negatives printing. Man Ray enjoyed his experiments in darkroom involving Rayograph and Solarisation. The second factor is the development psychological theory. In the early stage, Diamond was a psychologist and attempted to cure his patients, while he could only rely on physiognomic theory for developing his research. Mumler was just forced by the population of spiritualism to take his spirit developments. The key turning point was the emergence of surrealism photography, as it was supported by the psychoanalysis from Sigmund Freud. Last but not least, culture plays a role of soil. Photography and modern psychology were all born from western culture. Photographers regard cameras as the tool of observing the material world and psychic reality in a rational way of thinking. Diamond described photography as "a perfect mirror". Nevertheless, in the Oriental culture, photography was developed from tools to linguistics. As a psychic language, Fukase and Ren projected their psychic reality into their images. Without photography, they almost could not live, as it would be a disruption from their interior world.

The world is changing rapidly. I hope this thesis could be material for further research on human's unconscious images in the future. Human's internal world is vast and colourful as the infinite cosmos. New technology continually would not only advance the practice, but also bring questions. For instance, when A.I. robots could control cameras consciously instead of by program, will they analyse human's consciousness and unconsciousness? What's more, whether a robot gets depression when we give them a function of dream? Will they visualise their unconscious as well? So far, I think it is a little hard to discuss that, because we are still in the initial phase

of A.I. photography. Besides, the young generation was born with the internet culture and live in the digital context, using social media for communicating with the external reality. Meanwhile, man's conscious and unconscious data were saved on the internet which is like our memory. Based on that, the A.I. system would understand mankind better and better by learning and updating itself. But I could not imagine what would happen between mankind's psychic reality and the new technology. Maybe Dr. Diamond's dream, that using photography to treat mental issues, will be fulfilled one day.

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