

MODERN MONSTERS /  
DEATH AND LIFE OF FICTION  
TAIPEI BIENNIAL 2012  
09.29.2012 – 01.13.2013

Opening and Preview: 28.09.2012  
Organizer: Taipei Fine Arts Museum  
Curator: Anselm Franke

The Taipei Biennial 2012 takes as its point of departure the ancient Chinese monster known as *Taowu*, whose evolution has been traced by the literary historian David Der-Wei Wang in his book *The Monster That is History*. Wang shows that somewhere in the course of Chinese history, writers and historians began to identify the vicious monster *Taowu* with history itself, since it could foresee and thwart human intentions. The *Taowu* thus represents the human failure to master history and occupies the blind spot of different historical rationales. It is a fictional representation and symptomatic expression of that which notoriously escapes human reasoning and historical accounts. Wang suggests that it is *modern* Chinese history in particular that lends itself to a reading through the *Taowu*, against the backdrop of a twentieth century characterized by utopian aspirations notoriously overshadowed by systemic violence.

The Taipei Biennial 2012 explores the possibility that *Taowu* is a common experience of all modernity. It is the continuity of violence and brutality exerted in the name of enlightenment and rationality that turns the monster into a signifier of history. This is a history continuously buried in the contradictions of modern rationality itself.

Yet rather than engaging with the mass cultural aesthetics of monstrosity — a “spectacle of violated boundaries” — the Biennial looks instead at dialectic strategies that address, expose, and disarm the anonymous, systemic monstrosity of modernity, speaking of the way its normative matrix strangles the imaginary of the present and our horizons of possibility.

This deadlock is disarmed in fiction, which reveals the blind spots of historiographic and documentary accounts, and which addresses the fundamental underside, the systemic terror, that lurks behind modernity’s emancipatory promises. Throughout the exhibition, the *Taowu* is encountered never as a stable identity or image, but as permanently shape-shifting inversions, which, situating us at the tilting point occupied by the *Taowu*, speak of the lives and deaths of fictions within the condition and mythology called modernity.

The Taipei Biennial 2012 engages with the re-narration of modern histories at these tilting points. Woven into the fabric of more than forty contributions are six mini-museums. These mini-museums, along with the works and projects surrounding them, move between documents and fictionalizations, creating a montage in which the very figure of the monster assumes ever-new identities. The result is a parcours of “multi-stable figures” — those well-known graphic depictions in which two different perceptions are possible, and the relation between figure and background can be reversed.

## CONTRIBUTORS

John Akomfrah, Maria Thereza Alves, Adam Avikainen, Ashish Avikunthak, Eric Baudelaire, Fernando Bryce, Chang Chao-Tang, Chen Chieh-Jen, Yin-Ju Chen, Yu-Cheng Chou, Jason Dodge, Jimmie Durham, Harun Farocki, Omer Fast, Peter Friedl, Simon Fujiwara, Andrea Geyer, Yervant Gianikian / Angela Ricci Lucchi, Virlani Hallberg, Hsu Chia-Wei, Hannah Hurtzig, Luis Jacob, Maryam Jafri, Chia-En Jao, Rajkamal Kahlon, Kao Chung-Li, Joachim Koester, Jompert Kuswidananto, Marysia Lewandowska / Neil Cummings, Liu Ding, Joven Mansit, Angela Melitopoulos / Maurizio Lazzarato, Jakrawal Nilthamrong, Boris Ondreička, Willem Oorebeek, The Otolith Group, Pak Sheung Chuen, Pratchaya Phinthong, Roe Rosen, Andreas Siekmann, Elisa Strinna, Sun Xun, Teng Chao-Ming, Rosemarie Trockel, Anton Vidokle / Hu Fang, Danh Vo, Wei-Li Yeh

## THE MUSEUM OF RHYTHM

with Erick Beltrán, Francisco Camacho, Hanne Darboven, Juan Downey, Simone Forti, Frank B. Gilbreth, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Channa Horwitz, Ken Jacobs, Katarzyna Kobro, Labour Exchange Band, Richard Lin, Jean Painlevé, Gerhard Rühm, Tomo Savić-Gecan, Yashas Shetty and others, curated by Natasha Ginwala

## THE MUSEUM OF ANTE-

MEMORIALS with Robert Filliou, Deimantas Narkevičius, Peter Watkins, curated by Eric Baudelaire

THE MUSEUM OF THE MONSTER THAT IS HISTORY with Reza Abedini, Bavand Behpoor, James T. Hong, Hou Chun-Ming, Jei Li, Kelvin Kyung Kun Park, Eyal Weizman, Paulo Tavares, Steffen Krämer, Tony Chun-Hui Wu, Yao-Chung Wu and anonymous contributors, curated by James T. Hong and Anselm Franke

## THE MUSEUM OF GOURD

with Chen Szuting, Ting-Ya Chang, Daizaburo Harada, Kung Yi-Fang, Hsu Ming-Sheng, Shiro Takahashi, curated by Chihiro Minato

## THE MUSEUM OF THE INFRA-STRUCTURAL UNCONSCIOUS

with Armin Linke, Ching-Yueh Roan, curated by John Palmesino and Ann-Sofi Rönnskog (Territorial Agency), and Anselm Franke with Yi-Jen Chen and David Hellström

## THE MUSEUM OF CROSSINGS

with Virlani Hallberg, Lin Swallow Y., Hongjohn Lin, Tsai Chih-Hsien and others, curated by Hongjohn Lin and Anselm Franke



臺北市10461中山北路3段181號  
181, Zhong Shan N. Road, Sec. 3, Taipei 10461, Taiwan, R.O.C.  
Tel +886 2 2595 7656 / Fax +886 2 2594 4104  
[www.tfam.museum](http://www.tfam.museum) / [info@tfam.gov.tw](mailto:info@tfam.gov.tw)