

SIX
TEEN
PRO
FEES
SIONS

Modern Monsters / Death and Life of Fiction



Hu Fang

The film *Two Suns*, a collaboration between artist Anton Vidokle and writer Hu Fang, is set in an abandoned concrete house in the Taiwanese countryside, situated between a forest and a highway. We watch the building slowly being clad by mirrors. In the process, the house gradually vanishes from sight as it becomes a mirror—or rather an image—of the surrounding environment. The English subtitles in the work comprise a narrative told in the first person by Anton Vidokle, in which he recounts a visit to the iconic Schröder House designed by Gerrit Rietveld for his lover in the Dutch city of Utrecht. The first house considered to be “modernist,” Rietveld’s abode contained no mirrors—because the mirror, for the architect, created a space that was beyond his control. The Chinese spoken text in the film arises from this text by Hu Fang.

No. 1: The Escaped Convict

This man standing before you is an “escaped convict” known as No. 124. His most notable trait is his calm demeanor and composure. Apparently, in his mind, he has already overcome any sense of distinction between being in or out of jail. In his opinion, the value of land and air remains the same regardless of where he is. Rumor has it that No. 124 had surreptitiously moved to the other side of the wall when no one was paying attention; in fact, no one is certain whether he was able to create the illusion of the wall moving, simply by shifting his physical body a little.

This is No. 124’s conviction: in the near future, the land on which the jail sits will become the site of a union between real estate and financial institutions. At that point, people will no longer be as interested in escaping from jail successfully, as they will be in how to cross back into jail.

No. 2: The Scriptwriter

Before the incident took place, he had been hiding in a secluded country villa in the outskirts whilst writing his script. Prior to this, the quality and efficiency of his creative output had made him the darling of the media. Yet as the masses were enthusiastically consuming his works, no one had imagined that he would have needed some sort of stimulant to continue his rapid creative productivity.

In the beginning, that stimulant consists of a combination of fast food and instant coffee. He gradually no longer had time to spend with his family and children. When he finished with his script *Fighting Till the End for Love*, he had lost his wife and kids. The alcohol in his glass was then replaced with petrol; he was discovered by someone to be guzzling petrol at a gas station. Some people suspected that he had contracted an illness known as “Foxconn,” which is known to induce the hardening of human muscle, turning into machines.

He was quietly isolated. As many people started reminiscing about and missing his scripts, news about his infection had already spread across the media and films, and was diffused in the black holes of our consciousness. Just like the widely quoted line in his script *Fighting Till the End for Love*: “Man is a machine of love, and it is precisely because we have emotions that we can become the most outstanding machine in the world.”

No. 3: The Depressive

On a beautiful sunny morning, he witnessed his beloved plant wilting, its yellowed leaves trembling in the breeze. His lips went dry, and he began to water the plant repeatedly. He thought to himself in retrospect that the same dismal fate would befall anything and everything with him: “I’ve already been wilting for so long, and yet I’d imagined that a lovely little plant would grant me the opportunity to experience the scent of spring.”

No. 4: The Collector

As she slept soundly, he scrutinized the colors and shapes of the tattoos on her body, as if he was gazing at a dim yet awe-inspiring sixteenth century religious painting or a Chinese landscape painting from the Song Dynasty—there was little else which elicited this sense of inner serenity within him. Landscape and religious paintings draw from a certain sense of human existence to passionately express the melding of, and opposition between, life and death. If it were possible, he would willingly keep her in his collection—that whole mysterious existence of this girl in her youth.



Hu Fang and Anton Vidokle, *Two Suns*, 2012, single-channel video projection.

No. 5: The Film Director

It was a night of revelry for luxury brands. After the gala dinner, he found himself staring at the remnant end of a candle, which resembled a diminutive yet virginal phallus. As he passed by the workshops in the suburbs, he could hear the rumblings of machines curiously fusing with the ringing in his ear, to create a vision akin to Antonioni's film *Red Desert*.

As demonstrated by Kieslowski, in today's context, although the telling and transmittance of moral stories is of extreme importance, it is also incredibly difficult to do so. The director's predicament is similar to that of someone consumed in lovemaking on a sofa, suddenly catching a glimpse of the television screen showing SOS helplines in aid of children in disaster areas.

Therefore, on this film location known as *the world*, given the last-minute absence of the actual director, and in order to ensure that the whole production schedule is not delayed, he would have no choice but to steel himself and pick up the megaphone—even if he is surrounded by glares of envy.

No. 6: The Animal Trainer

The performance goes as follows: initially, all the spare parts moving down a production line appear similar to one another, but reveal them-

selves to be grey rabbits lined one after another. Apparently, the animal trainer is a psychic from East Africa, but had somehow “lost” his psychic powers here. He could only wave his whip mechanically as he directed the zebras through their night parade, whilst uttering—in poor Mandarin, “Love animals, love yourself, that means loving your friends, loving the world you live in.”

No. 7: The Hotel Cleaner

His job was to remain unflappable as he cleared all used hotel toiletries, while replacing them promptly. Each time, through these leftover items, he would have the opportunity to acquaint himself intimately with the person who had left: the disheveled bedsheets that still emanated their bodies’ remnant warmth, a few strands of hair left in the drainage hole in the sink, hastily scribbled phone numbers on the notepad on the bedside table, old newspapers, all sorts of receipts, an unfinished cup of water in the teacup, used towels all bundled up in a whorl, dampness on the bathroom floor, a half-used bottle of shampoo emptied out in the bathtub, mist condensing on the mirror, perhaps the TV is still on, frozen at their favourite channel, the light remains switched on, the curtains drawn open, and beyond the window lies a Southern autumn’s day... In a moment, just like how a cassette tape is rewound, his hands will revive all this to their “original states.” In a few hours, the new arrival will find: the curtains drawn tightly shut, the bedclothes neatly arranged, the toilet bowl in the bathroom once again sealed with a paper wrapper that says “As Yet Unopened,” and all the body warmth and odours of the previous occupant rapidly eliminated, to be replaced by the scent of freshly washed sheets. With his hands, everything within this room will always retain the appearance of its “original state,” as they await your arrival and use.

No. 8: The Manifesto Expert

He is obsessed with writing manifestos, in the hopes that his words would be as widely disseminated and influential as the *Communist Manifesto* or the *Surrealist Manifesto*. He dreams of being

called upon to draft forwards for the myriad translated editions of his work: “Now, as in 1848, a new historical era is about to begin...”

He says: “People think that manifestos are the sunlit expressions of courage, when in fact they are the midnight distillation of regret. Manifestos are the proof that we transgress by day, and repent by night.”

No. 9: The Virus Expert

At first, he was like a child who takes advantage of being sick to appropriate its mother’s concern, using his illness as a bid for his wife’s attention. Later, after he developed an interest in Chinese medicine and Buddhism, he began to actively infect himself with viruses. His reasoning was quite simple. If he could concentrate all the ills of the world into his own body, he would become a virus expert, both carrier and cure for every virus in existence. In this way, he could become one with the “All.” What Jesus took upon his body, now would be his to endure.

*My lungs are on fire
Like sunset burning in the west*

No. 10: The Fortuneteller

The lines on his palm were haphazard, and he has been diligently trying to repair them. The chaos on his palm seemed to be a reflection of society’s disorder, and he was convinced that as he gradually opened his heart, the lines on his palm would also become clearer with time.

No. 11: The Lovesick

She had torn something, and that moment became entangled with the present, resulting in an nagging pressure to survive. A long time ago, that inadvertent comment, that fleeting look in the eye, have frozen in time to become a pain that could not be ignored.

“In the end, I am unable to plunge into that sort of life within this unfamiliar city, but instead have a different sort of longing.”

As trees fall to the ground, they slowly evolve to become organic matter—and who would be able to explain this precisely? Even the boulders of Taihu can possess enough life within them to strike against water and penetrate rocks.

No. 12: The One Who Lost His Mother Tongue

“I have been living in this hotel for 10 years, and have not had any opportunity to see my wife and family.”

He elaborated, “Simply because I am one who has lost my mother tongue.”

No. 13: The Property Speculator

As a property speculator, he would drive his car around the city daily, carrying a large keyring of keys. At his peak, his bag contained keys for a total of 20 houses.

There was a luxurious yacht anchored by the river next to the Royal Sales Office.

Under the setting sun at dusk, a solitary man kicked a football in front of the dilapidated buildings.

The houses they possessed were huge and spacious, and at times, that struck fear in the hearts of their wives.

No. 14: The Image Man

He tried to depict his own image but ended up being entranced by it. As a result, he dedicated his whole life towards replicating the life of this image.

For:

Lovers who could not divide their attention;

Lovers with a guilty conscience;

Lovers who would not settle down;

For:

The pink assholes of neon lights;

The schizophrenia of capitalism;

And the myriad shades of colours in this world;
There will be a film to document the process of how his
image is reproduced:

How it can become something that is portable, can be displayed
as well as put up for sale (just like how famous personalities
are used as models for little sculptures which are sold to tourists
as mementos);

How to uncover the absurd logic of existence (for instance:
vacations are taken so as to make us work even harder);

How to become both faces of a coin (it is impossible to see
yourself and an image of your self simultaneously).

“I should look exactly the same as the image in my movie,”
he concluded about his life in the movie trailer.



Hu Fang and Anton Vidokle, *Two Suns*, 2012, single-channel video projection.

No. 15: The Moneychanger

Due to long periods of being sedentary, the solitary middle-aged
man counting banknotes behind the moneychanger counter at the
international airport had developed a tummy.

He would mutter to himself daily as if he
was chanting Buddhist scripture:

“Wanxian

Wangdu

Jiangwu City

The places which you would never Be able to go to.”

No. 16: The Seeker

When the Master gave up his life, relinquishing his only chance of survival to me, I didn't know if I could accept his sacrifice.

All I had ever cared about was the pursuit of pleasure and happiness. But he wanted me to search for the Meaning of Life.

The curse of youth, the Master's righteousness ... they had brought me nothing but endless pressure.

These days, people are terrified not by the imminence of the end, but rather by the rarified harmony that pervades the city.

But after seeing the Master's serenity in the face of death, it was as if my life had been returned to me. Never again will I fear its loss.

All I can do now is grope my way forward through the city's murk, and do my best to lay down the burdens of the flesh. In any event, before I know it I'll be old, and able to “follow my heart's desire without overstepping the line.”*

* Confucius: Analects: 2.4: “...at seventy I followed my heart's desire without overstepping the line.”
(translated by D.C. Lau, 1979, Penguin Books)