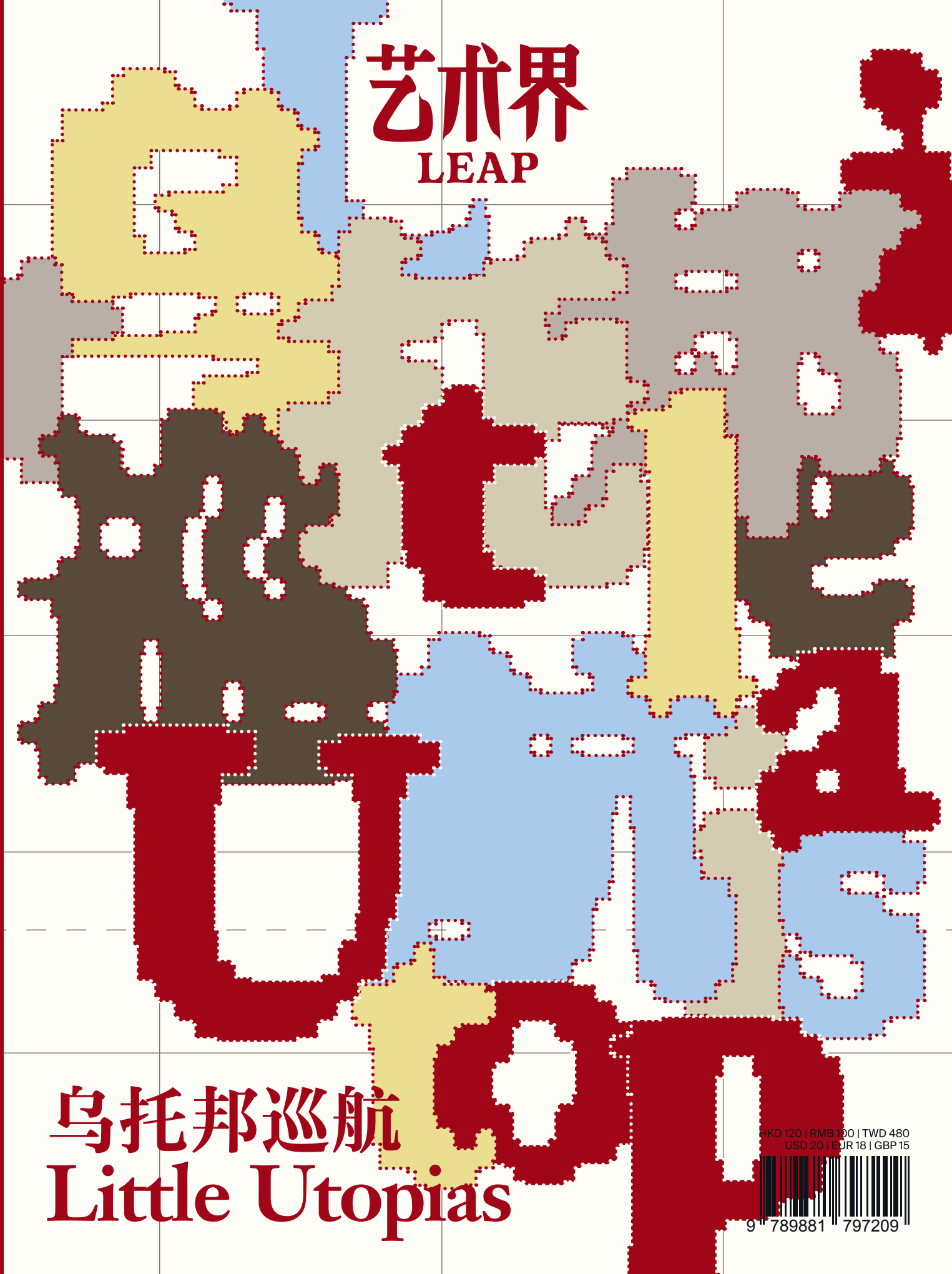

乌托邦巡航
Little Utopias

HKD 120 | RMB 100 | TWD 480
USD 20 | EUR 18 | GBP 15

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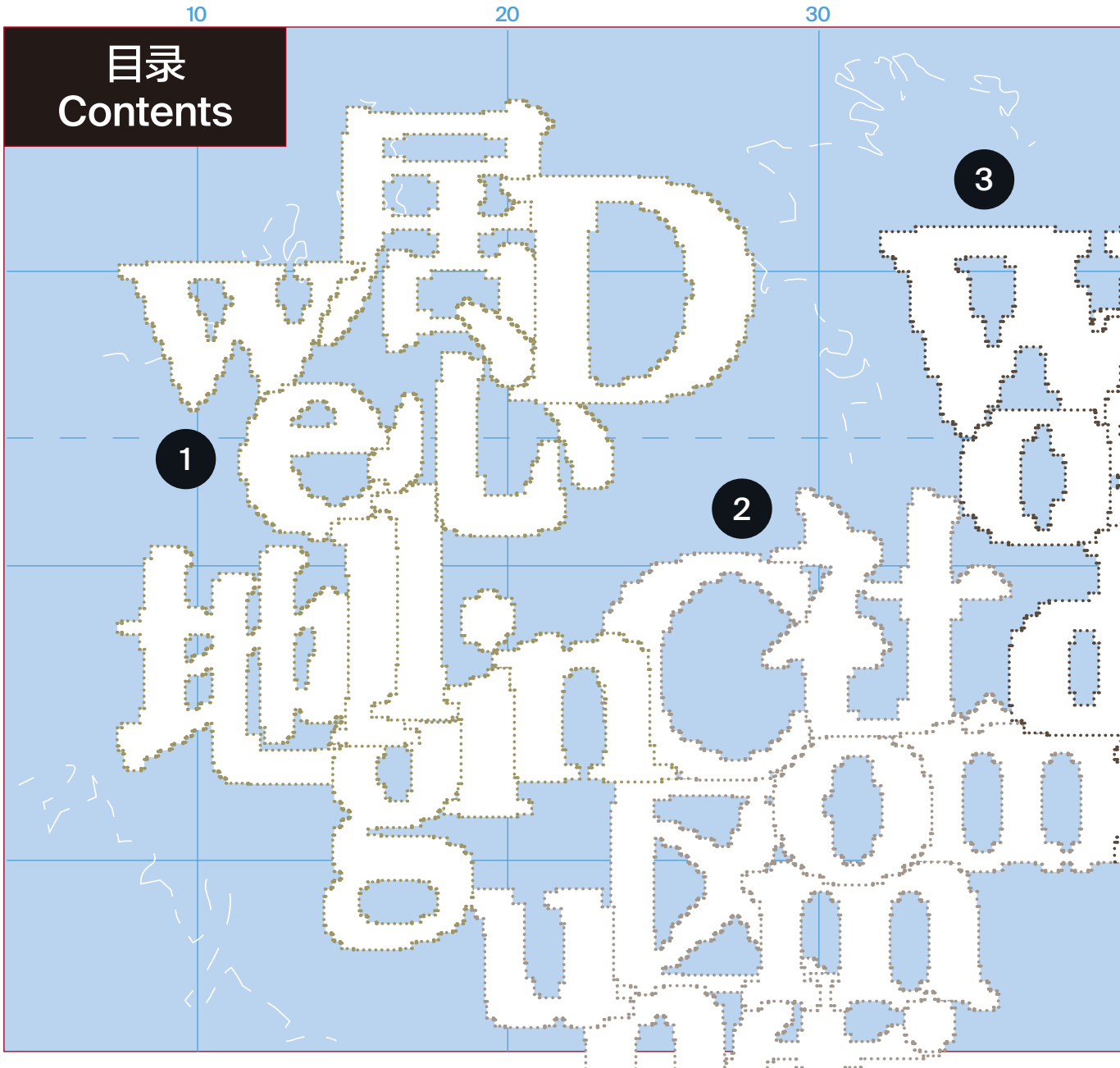

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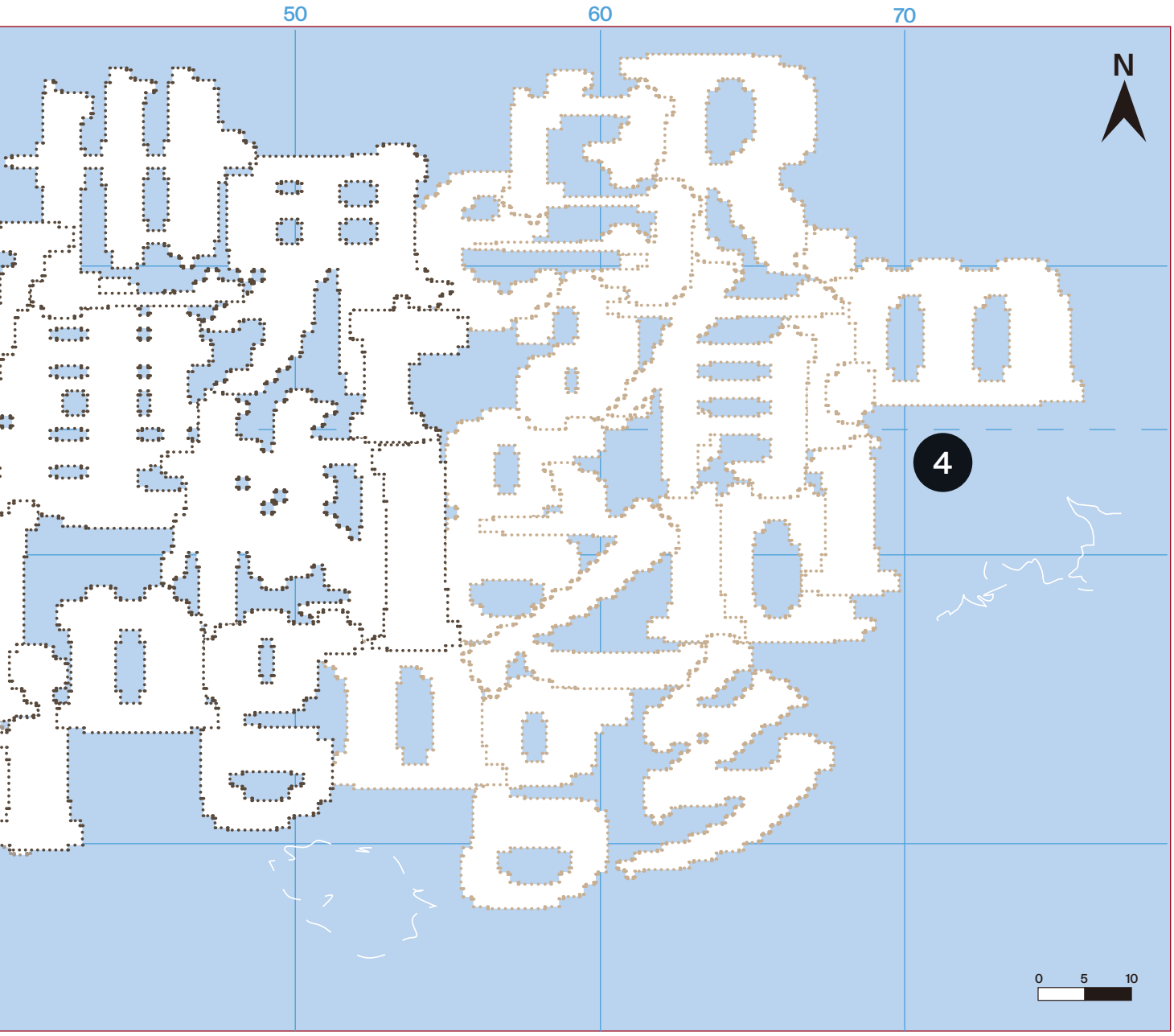

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Savage Winds, a Land of Stone, Forsaken Intelligence, Left Alone

图 1 / Fig. 1 《桃源十二村—第一章：牧羊者之耀》，2019—2020 年
电脑上六台人工智能实时深度学习电脑软件，4K 分辨率，无限时长
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Pilgrimage into Walden XII—Chapter I: The Honor of Shepherds, 2019–2020
6 machine learning AI live simulation softwares on computer, 4K resolution, infinite length
Courtesy the artist and Kiang Malingue

在无数科幻作品的设定中，包括近期引发热议的动画剧集《冥王》（2023）与《万神殿》（2022—2023）里，AI（人工智能）以及各类人造机器人作为人类的假想敌出现；但究其创作源头，仍是亘古不变的人类贪欲与仇恨。当邪恶并非某个腐化的灵魂、而是一种更系统化的环境，且其目标讽刺性地在于消除罪恶，那么对系统本身这一恶魔的揭示，不是靠某些超级英雄的一身肌肉或超能力就能快速解决的；艺术家自然也不是光环化的超级英雄，但她或有别的魔力法宝。

艺术家苗颖长期关注网络生态与数字伦理，她立足于技术、政治与社会的交叉点，清醒而警惕地在创作中驯用人工智能，探询技术、文化与权威之间渐趋消融的边界；在披着纷繁金融概念的数字艺术领域，她以铿锵的姿态与富有想象力的幽默感，揭示数字世界与现实世界的一体化，试验合成作者性这一颇具挑战的工作方式。苗颖将科幻、AI 以及与世隔绝的控制环境用于史诗式的三部曲创作《桃源十二村》（2019—2023）以及系列创作《科技炼金》（2023）中。在视觉上，新作显著区别于苗颖过往创作中对流行网络信息符号的挪用；两者共用的游戏引擎建模美学——不论是前者中血红色栅栏与尖顶石制房屋的暗影所营造出的（刻板印象式的）中世纪恐怖氛围，还是后者中浓重黑暗里点缀着橙、紫、绿等鲜亮色块与特效，以及水墨简笔风格的竹、石等元素——对无甚游戏经验的观者来说，大概都呈现出陌生化的距离感，以及浓烈的数字野蛮气息。此种数字景观与造物，连同其 AI 旁白语音所营造的观演气氛（在此，“演”指向实时模拟程序持续运算生成的永不重复的画面），将观者置于被动进入仪式的位置，使其与作品的关系更接近疑问或冥想，而非要去清晰掌握作品的叙事与意义。

图 2 / Fig. 2

“狂风凛冽，石地凄凉，遗弃智慧，独自彷徨”展览现场
马凌画廊，香港田湾空间，2023 年
图片致谢艺术家及马凌画廊
“Savage winds, a land of stone, Forsaken intelligence, left alone” Installation view at Kiang Malingue, Tin Wan, Hong Kong, 2023
Courtesy the artist and Kiang Malingu

出发！前往桃源十二村

《桃源十二村》三部曲的首次完整展出，成为苗颖入围中国香港西九龙M+视觉文化博物馆“希克奖2023”的展览内容。这一奖项作为著名中国当代艺术藏家乌利·希克创办于1998年的中国当代艺术奖（CCAA）的延续变体，旨在鼓励出生或工作于大中华地区的当代艺术家，面向国际展示并推广其艺术创作。

《桃源十二村，第一章：牧羊人之耀》（2019—2020）以哥特式尖塔结构作为 LED 竖屏的展示框架，局部烧焦的未涂层浅色木塔间缠绕着红黑色电线、绳索以及驯犬用具，六座木塔一字排开。屏幕中分别播放着通过人工智能深度学习生成的实时模拟影像，每一台屏幕都聚焦于一个“AI 牧羊人”，他们在虚构的中世纪世界“桃源十二村”中负责管制“村民”。画面中，人物的动作显得笨拙而卡顿，还会不时出现意义不明的跳动数字，以及虚拟环境中风格混杂的建筑与景观。不同牧羊人的人设对应不同的社会阶层，比如以杀马特打工仔为原型的工人、以朝阳大妈为蓝本的举报人。

图 1 / Fig. 1
图 3 / Fig. 3
图 4 / Fig. 4
图 8 / Fig. 8

《桃源十二村，第二章：剩余智能》（2021—2022）系意大利博洛尼亚现代美术馆委托创作的动画影片，其剧本由人工智能文本生成系统 GPT-3 编写，苗颖用游戏引擎导演了这部影片。其中的主角是生活在桃源十二村的一个蟑螂公民，她爱上人设为“学者”的 AI 牧羊人，后者因偷窃桃源十二村的能量石而被囚禁，于是主角以

图 5 / Fig. 5
图 10 / Fig. 10
图 11 / Fig. 11
图 15 / Fig. 15

图 3 / Fig. 3

《桃源十二村—第一章：牧羊者之耀》，2019—2020 年
电脑上六台人工智能实时深度学习电脑软件，4K 分辨率，无限时长
图片致谢艺术家及马凌画廊
Pilgrimage into Walden XII—Chapter I: The Honor of Shepherds, 2019–2020
6 machine learning AI live simulation softwares on computer, 4K resolution, Infinite length
Courtesy the artist and Kiang Malingue

其“斯德哥尔摩综合征式的爱恋”（艺术家语）试图通过开采比特币来解救他。影片投影前，供观者入座的五把木椅子上用常见于中世纪印刷品的英文字体分别写着：五喜（The Five Joyful），五悲（The Five Sorrowful），五辉煌信用（The Five Glory Credits），一吾民（15 个十年）（One Our People [fifteen decades]），十桃源梦（15 个十年）（Ten Walden Dreams [fifteen decades]）。

《桃源十二村，第三章：辉煌魔法之战》（2023）则系 M+ 委约作品，包含题为《辉煌魔法之战》《辉煌魔法—降服 No.1-No.3》《桃源十二村精神纲要》等多层次内容，展陈采取屏风装置、驯犬用具现成品等综合形制。观者可通过现场疑似“桃源十二村”地图的墙绘上的二维码访问作品网站“www.pilgrimageintowaldentwelve.com”，域名可直译为“桃源十二村朝圣之旅”。据现场展签提示，项目还包含手机应用与浏览器应用，它们都实时运作着互动式的人工智能深度学习程序。

整套三部曲的创作始于 2019 年，跨度四年，经历了全球多地皆严格管控居民行为的新冠疫情流行期。苗颖的创作灵感来自著名行为主义心理学家伯勒斯·弗雷德里克·斯金纳（Burrhus Frederic Skinner, 1904—1990）出版于 1948 年的乌托邦小说《桃源二村》（Walden Two），书中构想的监管社会结构甫一发表即引发了极大争议。对斯金纳来说，这种构想的科学指导原则源于俄国生理学家巴甫洛夫（Ivan Petrovich Pavlov）在制约反射研究中揭示的行为与环境之间的紧密联系。从“巴甫洛夫的狗”，到斯金纳“激励人的行为，从而控制他们的行为”这一早已普遍应用于家族、政府与企业管理的行为心理学说，及至现今国人生活中方方面面的联网征信体系，观者或许就能对作品中的驯犬用具心领神会，并进而理解，理解到，狗、蟑螂公民，抑或是在深度学习中驯练的牧羊人，都是身处严苛控制环境中的当代社会个体的明喻，并进而审思一体化的数字世界与现实世界底层的权力运转机制。

“桃源二村”只是《Walden Two》这本书的译名之一，另有版本译作“瓦尔登湖第二”。标题本身即提示了亨利·戴维·梭罗（Henry David Thoreau）的名著《瓦尔登湖》是斯金纳写作的灵感，甚至范本。梭罗以细腻柔和的笔触描写自然风光对他心灵的抚慰和触动，在与世隔绝的朴素生活中痛思不平等处境对下层人生活造成的悲苦及不堪，可斯金纳行文干涩，语句乏味，全然不似瓦尔登湖既已成为心灵栖居地的代名词——这也是“桃源村”意译的缘由，尤其让中文读者立即联想到陶渊明的名篇《桃花源记》。

而苗颖正是选择斯金纳的著作来驯用 AI，其他“投喂”素材还包括霸道总裁体 S&M 恋爱网文小说英译本、祈祷书、中国和美国的意识形态文本等，“《剩余智能》这部影片就像《桃源二村》多次迭代后的更新版本。”[1] 影片观感则巧妙地揭示斯金纳笔下的乌托邦实则敌托邦（dystopia，反乌托邦）。苗颖在《WIRED》杂志的采访中介绍了其与 GPT-3 合作撰写影片剧本的过程：“起初它生成了一个短篇。计算机科学专业的两位学生，Michael Barron 和 Benjamin Hwang，帮我一起将这个短篇拆成不同部分，再把这些部分回喂给 GPT-3 继续发展，此后的演化版本则成了影片中的不同章节。我们从不同版本中选出最贴切的内容。等剧本确定后，我再开始做影片的

1

Jennifer Conrad, “How GPT-3 Wrote a Movie About a Cockroach-AI Love Story”, *Wired*, 5 Aug 2022; https://www.wired.com/story/ai-artist-miao-ying-qanda/ [accessed 5 Dec 2022].

图 5 / Fig. 5 《桃源十二村—第二章：剩余智能》，2021—2022 年
装置，电影（GPT3 人工智能编剧、5K 分辨率、33 分 27 秒），
由博洛尼亚现代艺术博物馆委任创作
M+ 展览现场，2023 年
图片致谢艺术家及 M+
Pilgrimage into Walden XII Chapter II: Surplus Intelligence, 2021–2022
Installation, film(script by GPT3, 5K, 33 min 27 sec), commissioned by
Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna
Installation view at M+, 2023
Courtesy the artist and M+

图 4 / Fig. 4 《桃源十二村，第一章：牧羊人之耀》，2019—2020 年
“希克奖 2023”展览现场，2023 年
摄影：梁誉聪
图片致谢 M+
Pilgrimage into Walden XII, Chapter I: The Honor of Shepherds (2019–2020)
Installation view of Sigg Prize 2023 exhibition, M+, 2023
Photo: Dan Leung
Courtesy M+, Hong Kong

所有视觉……GPT-3 发展得真的很快。2019 年我刚开始这个创作时用的是 GPT-2，当时它还没法写出一个连贯的故事。只过了一两年，它就已经大幅进阶了。”[2]

网页基地：山寨景观与胡闹叙事

在 M+ 展览现场组合成的“烧脑世界”即是上述协作的成果，而这种协作并非轻而易举。苗颖曾说：“艺术家需要在新的关系中调整工作方式。”[3] 回顾其创作历程，她也确实如此身体力行，对不断出现的新生网络现象时刻保持敏感：从 2014 年在上海视界艺术中心的个展“吉福岛”（.gif ISLAND）中运用 .gif 动图、迷因表情包、手机修图美颜 APP、苹果手机屏幕视效等日常生活中的科技图式，探讨严格监管下的中国互联网及网民们表现出的令人惊喜的创造力与幽默感，并提出「中式互联网」一词；到 2016 年在上海没顶画廊的 M50 展厅的个展“内容觉醒”，在全球后网络艺术的浪潮席卷与注意力经济直线飙升之时，继续延展修图审美，提出“超级素人”时代的“方便美学 / 半屁股美学”（Practical/Half-Assed Aesthetics）；再到同年的《亲特网加》（2016）与 2018 年的《硬核数据排毒》，于网络现成图像的堆叠之外，借用基础的 PPT 特效、滚动网页、VR 虚拟现实建模影像等，将艺术家喻为灵活取用网络素材的“编辑”，探讨国家层面的意识形态与宣贯、以及商业资本同互联网巨头的品牌化营销话术如何塑造网络环境和个体认知。

肌肉发达的雷震子造型的牧羊人，《硬核数据排毒》网页中长着八根独角兽之角的鸽子与恐龙还有犀牛的合成萌感怪兽，多次出现于其展览中、象征着隔离与情调的屏风，以共通的鲜艳色彩与杂糅画风，构成苗颖式的虚拟宇宙。塑料感的山寨景观与略嫌胡闹的虚构叙事一如前述通俗却新颖的“自造词”贯穿于其创作，此种“质感”曾经“临摹”了网络流行的现实质感，现今则在游戏建模与 AI 驯用上摸索新美学。十年前，作品《景观 .gif》（2013—2014）在躺椅上用懒人支架固定了多台不同尺寸的平板电脑和电子相簿，构造出另类的“牙科诊室”，用循环播放的像素短片“以毒攻毒地治疗”网络成瘾症；错综复杂的电线与夹子营造出异教般的洗脑仪式感。而在同期的另一作品《APP 催眠》（2013—2014）中，三个帐篷支架里铺着假草皮与印有 gif 图案的靠垫，大幅的渐变色投影呈 iPhone 应用符号的圆角四边形，以海浪声配乐，意图营造粗糙沉浸感与神圣性的冥想氛围。而今年紧接着 M+“希克奖 2023”展览开幕，在香港马凌画廊田湾工作室的个展“狂风凛冽，石地凄凉，遗弃智慧，独自彷徨”中，当年的现成品拼贴景观随着苗颖的创作演进，迭代为无限时长的深度学习实时模拟电脑软件《科技炼金》系列。在这片架空的幻想虚拟世界，“分裂峡谷”与“熔岩凹洞”等不同“景点”，以纷杂混乱的抽象地景与枯燥难辨的旁白语音在物理展厅内营造出时空无锚定氛围，引导观者“放空”进入平静与思考的状态；而拥有游戏经验的观者，更可熟练地操控游戏手柄，在屏幕中进入苗颖所构造的这片“异世界”，辨认眼前变动不居的画面背后那位具有强烈“黑箱”特征、超越“创造者 / 艺术家”管控的 AI“炼金师”。[4]

以滚动网页串联戏谑现实的“故事”则首见于《亲特网加》，www.chinternetplus.com 网站中世界互联网大会乌镇峰会 logo 中

图 7 / Fig. 7
图 14 / Fig. 14

图 6 / Fig. 6
图 12 / Fig. 12

图 9 / Fig. 9

2

Jennifer Conrad, “How GPT-3 Wrote a Movie About a Cockroach-AI Love Story”, *Wired*, 5 Aug 2022; https://www.wired.com/story/ai-artist-miao-ying-qanda/ [accessed 5 Dec 2022].

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4

马凌画廊，“苗颖：狂风凛冽，石地凄凉，遗弃智慧，独自彷徨”展览新闻稿，2023 年。

的彩环被替换成了“页面等待加载”的放射渐变图案。整个滚动网页从“品牌故事”讲起，再到“我们的机密”“我们的目标”“我们的愿景”（原文是“我们的视角”）“我们的体验”，全篇都是基于已故前任总理李克强提出的“互联网 +”的官方叙述改写的无聊好笑的说明文字。类似的故事编写形式延续至两年后的《硬核数据排毒》：“想远离脸书、谷歌这些市值数十亿美元的企业，来一次‘数码排毒’吗？只要将虚拟私人网络（VPN）设定到中国内地，即是这些网站和流动应用程式均被封锁之处，便可享受一下轻松写意的‘网上隐居生活’！”作为 M+ 数码委约项目的首件作品，M+ 官网展示了这段广告体作品介绍。（中式互联网）防火墙的火，也是数据排毒的毒。由此，对网络审查与数据剥削的探讨有机地联系了起来。在作品网站 www.hardcoredigitaldetox.com 的一段模拟影像中，夕阳未央的宁静海面霞光绮丽，一块四四方方的岛屿漂浮其上。被修剪整齐的草坪与树林中，栖息着一群服务器。长条形的服务器罩着随风起伏的白色布套，套子上印有全球最知名的品牌 logo。随风起伏，既像是呼吸着的生物，又像是被抽离了生命的尸体。独角兽角点缀其间，既安详又危险。这一模仿畜牧农场的景观，亦可关联到“桃源十二村”中的“牧羊人”设定：对公民的监管同样是一种驯用。

滚动网页作为创作媒介，延续至“桃源十二村朝圣之旅”。网站是非常易于访问的界面，对无法亲临展厅的人而言，访问网站即可了解前述苗颖的这些作品。通常作为品牌形象宣传的介质被期待经常更新，而 AI 的实时虚拟能力则在某种层面上满足了这种期待。

起先，“网络艺术”（Net Art）是指将网络内容、网络本身的特定媒介与语言作为素材加以创作，但逐渐地，艺术家的角色不可能仅是旁观者，只局限于学习和观察网络文化；而是不可避免地置身于网络文化之中，在其中行动、表演，成为网络文化的参与者。

出生于 1985 年的上海，苗颖的成长伴随着信息技术的普及，她初次接触电脑是在公立学校一尘不染、必须穿鞋套入内的计算机房，运行系统还是图形化操作界面普及之前的 DOS。自小表露出绘画天分与兴趣，苗颖 2003 年考入杭州中国美术学院刚刚成立的新媒体系，成为该专业的首届学生，学习录像、网络、动画、声音、互动装置艺术、摄影等课程。2007 年，她创作了毕业作品《盲区》，直指国内互联网敏感词，这也是她的第一件与中式互联网直接相关的作品。同年，iPhone 问世，“谷歌中国”因网络审查退出中国市场。而苗颖在本科毕业后，前往纽约州立大学阿尔弗莱德艺术设计学院电子综合艺术专业继续念研究生。她的从艺之路见于许多与她同代际的艺术家：独生子女、经济改善、美院求学、留学深造、业界繁荣，展览、收藏与委托创作频频。千禧至今，相对国油版雕等“旧媒体”所成立的“新媒体”眼见也成为了“旧概念”，曾经的“网络艺术”“后网络”等学术概念也在有关 AI、深度学习、自然语言处理、实时模拟电脑软件等时髦的专有名词与艺术工作方法前褪色。作为“单件”物体——不论是实物还是虚拟物——的作品也在转向如“桃源十二村”这般能够持续衍生的“世界”。苗颖没有把梅粉红色、四块腹肌、白色龅牙露在嘴外、表情透着无辜的蟑螂做成雕塑，她在展厅中采用的实物更多扮演着虚拟叙事的注脚；在《剩余智能》影片中，森林野地的清凉夜色里，蟑螂主角坐在石块上天真地晃荡着细小双腿，她折叠起来的热红色翅膀

图 6 / Fig. 6

《硬核数据排毒》，2018 年
综合媒体装置，由 M+ 委任创作
加拿大多伦多大学美术馆展览现场，2022 年
图片致谢艺术家与多伦多大学美术馆
Hardcore Digital Detox, 2018
Comprehensive installation, commissioned by M+ Museum
Installation view at Art Museum at the UofT, Toronto, 2022
Courtesy the artist and Art Museum at the UofT

不同于日常生活中“肮脏”与“杀不死”的同义词的“小强”带给我们厌恶与恐惧，而成为囚禁于封闭控制系统中脆弱却渴求生命力的可爱个体。在游戏引擎中，由艺术家与 AI 合成的作者性使她可以永久地“活”下去。

“当人被削减为数据，就跟蟑螂很相似。”苗颖选择蟑螂这一形象的理由很简短，其逻辑根植于对数字伦理的理解与思考。在“希克奖 2023”的官方视频中，苗颖用“不祥”与“天真”形容“桃源十二村”[5]。不祥的预感指向未知的危险，它在人们对信息环境与尖端科技的不信任中得以培养。政府、企业掌握大数据的垄断性权威，区块链、NFT 带动下的新兴艺术金融模式，及至 AI 的盛行对网络信息环境肉眼可见的剧烈、飞速的影响，都指向了那道危险。“我一方面惊喜于 AI 生成文本的‘才华’和一点点‘不对劲’，但它的进展之快，它所吸收的所有网络信息，这么庞大的数据，它也在不断地吐出它的版本。历史像素化这个说法我觉得非常形象，也不是耸人听闻。我担忧的是历史会被轻易改写，未来的人们将无从探知真相。这是不忍想象的未来。”

“人们可能更一厢情愿地相信是自己在使用工具，而不是工具在使用自己。”[6] 这句听来熟悉的话，亦透露着苗颖对艺术家这一角色的警觉：在驯用 AI 的同时，艺术家能否不沦为 AI 牧羊人的羊？

顾灵
一位活跃的写作者、翻译和编辑，拿过灵买会「即兴写作夜」冠军。

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“Miao Ying: Pixelated Pasts”, M+ website, published on 25 Sep 2023; https://www.mplus.org.hk/en/magazine/miao-ying-artist-interview-sigg-prize-2023/ [accessed 11 Dec 2023].

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https://www.artforum.com.cn/interviews/9680

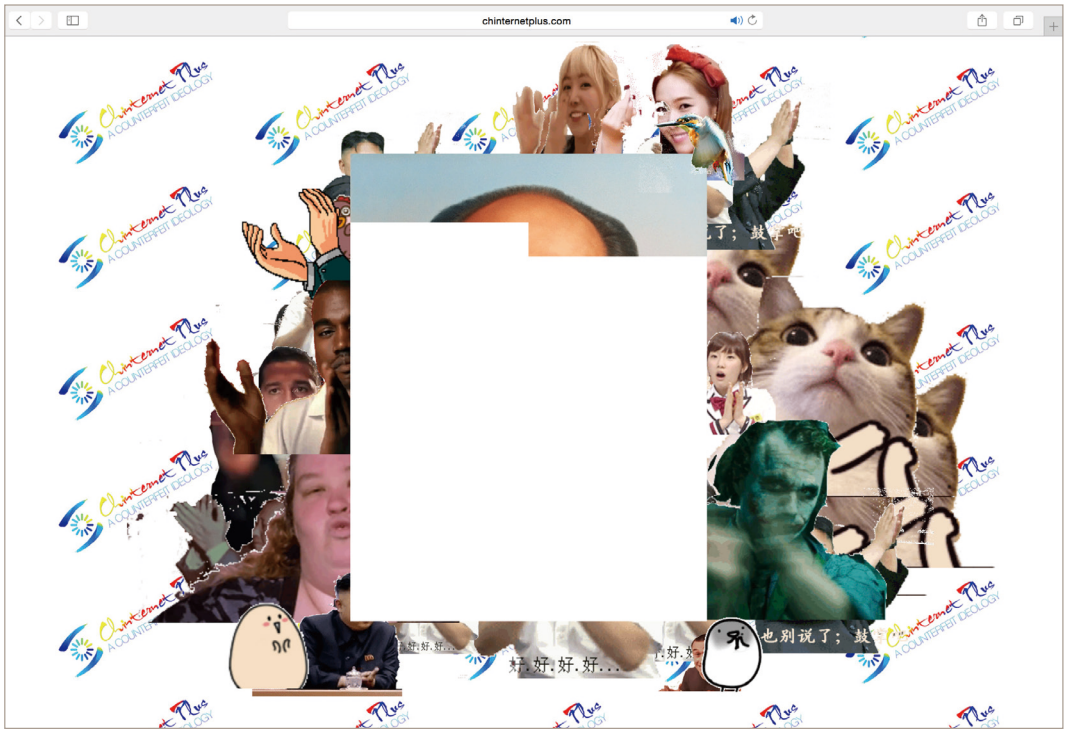

图 7 / Fig. 7 《亲特网加》（静帧），2016 年 综合媒体装置 图片致谢艺术家 *Chinternet Plus* (still), 2016 Multimedia installation Courtesy the artist

图 8 / Fig. 8 《桃源十二村—第一章：牧羊者之耀》(静帧，牧羊人形象)，2019—2020 年
电脑上 6 台人工智能实时深度学习电脑软件，4K 分辨率，无限时长
图片致谢艺术家及马凌画廊
Pilgrimage into Walden XII—Chapter I: The Honor of Shepherds (Still, image of the Shepherd), 2019–2020
6 machine learning AI live simulation softwares on computer, 4K resolution, infinite length
Courtesy the artist and Kiang Malingue

In endless sci-fi works, for instance, the two animated TV series that have stirred blazing discussions recently, *PLUTO* (2023) and *Pantheon* (2022–2023), AI (Artificial Intelligence), as well as all varieties of human-made robots, has been set to appear as the imaginary enemy of humans, whereas, the origin of such creation remains the very greed and hatred, ever persisting throughout human's own history. When the evil is not merely one corrupted soul but a whole environment, more systemized with an ironic objective of eliminating villainy, it is no longer simply the muscle nor superpower of a random superhero that could be relied on to reveal the intrinsically evil System in a snap; an artist is no haloed superheroine, of course not, but the alternative talismanic resolution needed here might precisely be her possessions.

The artist Miao Ying has a lasting interest in cyber ecology & digital ethics and a standing on the crossing between technology, politics, and society. She tames the artificial intelligence in her artmaking, soberly, vigilantly, and seeks the vanishing boundary between technology, culture, and authority. In the realm of digital art where garish terms from finance are worn for sport, she makes visible the assimilation in the world between the digital and physical ends, carrying both robust gesture and imaginative humor, and experiments on synthesizing authorship, a rather challenging working method. Miao has been integrating sci-fi premises, AI, and isolated surveilled environments in her epic trilogy, *Pilgrimage into Walden XII* (2019–2023), and the serial works *Technomancy* (2023). Visually, these works significantly differentiate themselves from the appropriation of cyber symbols from online pop cultures as in Miao's previous works. The aesthetics of video game engine modeling—in the former, this is exemplified by both series as the (stereotypical) medieval horror atmosphere, rendered by bloody-red fences and shadows of pitched-roof; in the latter, you can see the aesthetics in the juxtaposition of bright color blocks/special effects in orange, purple, green and so forth, or the elements of bamboo/stone in simplified ink painting style, sprinkled over the thick darkness. For viewers with little experience in video games, the works probably only present alienation and a strong temperament of digital savagery. This kind of digital landscapes and artifacts, working in conjunction with the acting-viewing atmosphere created by the AI narrator's voice (here 'acting' refers to the never-repetitive frames that are constantly generated by the real-time simulation program), leave the viewers in a passive position for rituals, making hem lean towards questioning or meditating with/in the artwork, rather than clarifying and grasping the narrative and meaning thereof.

Set off! To Walden XII

The premiere of Miao Ying's full video-installation trilogy, *Pilgrimage into Walden XII* has marked this shortlisted artist's nomination in the 2023 exhibition of the Sigg Prize, the award established by M+ Museum of visual culture from the West Kowloon District of Hong Kong. The prize is the evolved continuation of the formerly Chinese Contemporary Art Award (CCAA) that was founded in 1998 by the renowned collector of Chinese contemporary art, Dr. Uli Sigg. the Prize aims to encourage contemporary artists born or working in the Greater China region, by showcasing and promoting their works internationally.

Pilgrimage into Walden XII, Chapter I: The Honor of Shepherds (2019–2020) uses a group of wooden structures as the presenting framework for vertically hung LED screens. Resembling those gothic, pointed-roofed towers but made of light-colored, unfinished, yet partially burned wood studs, they rise in an array of six. Red and black power cords, ropes, and supplies for dog-taming purposes entangle between them. The screens are respectively playing live simulation videos, which are lively generated by artificial intelligence via deep learning. Each screen focuses on one "AI Social Shepherd" that is monitoring the citizens in "Walden XII," a fictional medieval world. In the picture, you'll see figures who act clumsy and choppy, flickering numbers informing nothing clear, and architectures and landscapes with no identical consistency in style yet jumbling in the virtual world. The personalities of these shepherds were designed to correspond to different social classes. For example, the worker was based on the archetype of "Shamate (杀马特)" migrant workers; the snitch refers to "Chaoyang da ma (朝阳大妈)" as well as the werewolf, the scholar, and so forth.

图 1 / Fig. 1
图 3 / Fig. 3
图 4 / Fig. 4
图 8 / Fig. 8

Pilgrimage into Walden XII Chapter Two: Surplus Intelligence (2021–2022) is an animated film commissioned by the Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, Italy. It is written by GPT-3, the artificial intelligence textual-generative model, and directed by Miao Ying on a game engine. The protagonist here is a cockroach citizen living in Walden XII. She fell in love with the AI shepherd with the scholar persona, "the Sophisticated King of the Night, Brain L1t3rat1" who was imprisoned for stealing the power stone of Walden XII. Thus, out of her Stockholm-syndrome-like love (in the artist's terms), the protagonist attempted to rescue him by mining Bitcoin. In front of the projection of this film, there are five wooden chairs for the viewers to seat. Whilst on the back of the chairs, there you read words, written in an English font commonly found in Medieval printed matters: The Five Joyful, The Five Sorrowful, The Five Glory Credits, One Our People (fifteen decades) and Ten Walden Dreams (fifteen decades).

图 5 / Fig. 5
图 10 / Fig. 10
图 11 / Fig. 11
图 15 / Fig. 15

图 9 / Fig. 9

《科技炼金之熔岩凹洞》，2023 年
深度学习实时模拟电脑软件，无限时长
图片致谢艺术家及马凌画廊
Technomancy at Lava pit, 2023
Deep learning live simulation software on PC, infinite length
Courtesy the artist and Kiang Malingue

Pilgrimage into Walden XII Chapter Three: Battle for Glorious Magic (2023) is a multi-layered commissioned work by M+ Museum. Its contents include *Battle for Glorious Magic*, *Glorious Magic – Trained NO.1-NO.3*, and *Spiritual guide of Walden XII*. It has combined various formal fabrications such as folding-screen installations and ready-made products for dog taming. When visiting the show, viewers will find that in the mural—a colored, suspected map of Walden XII that writes "www.pilgrimageintowaldentwelve.com," there is a QR code they can scan and access the same website address. According to the exhibition label, this project also contains interactive Apps that run on AI's deep learning in real-time, for both smartphones and browsers.

The making of the trilogy began in 2019 and then spanned for four years, encompassing the pandemic of COVID when strict regulation on citizen behavior was globally enforced. Miao Ying drew her inspiration from the utopian novel, *Walden II* (1948), written by the honored behavioral psychologist, Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904–1990) and published to shock the world with its much controversial envision of a regulated social structure. The scientific guideline of Skinner's ideas came from the close connection between behavior and environment, which was revealed in Russian physiologist Ivan Petrovich Pavlov's studies on conditioned reflexes. Starting from Pavlov's Dog, moving on to Skinner's "Motivate behaviors, so you can modify them," the behavioral psychology theory that has been widely, long applied in all management scenarios like familial, governmental, and corporative, then to the National credit investigation system which is omnipresent in a Chinese citizen's daily life, the wandering thoughts might help the audience realize, the utilities for domesticating dogs throughout the installations, likewise the characters of dog, roach citizen, or even the shepherd in deep learning, are all but similes for social subjects. They are situated in brutally controlled environments today. A viewer may further arrive at the contemplation of this assimilated digital world and the fundamental operating power mechanism in the real world.

In Chinese, the title *Walden Two* has been translated into two versions. One is "Taoyuan Er Cun", meaning "Peachland Village 2," the other version is "Wa'er'deng Hu Di'er," meaning "Walden II," which directly suggests that Henry David Thoreau's masterpiece, Walden was the inspiration, template even, of Skinner's writing. While Thoreau's, which delicately describes how natural beauty comforted him and delivers his diligently speculations on inequality and everyday misery of the lower class in his cloistered and humble living, Skinner's book feels drastically different. Tuned so dry and worded so dull, Skinner's *Walden* Pond is rather far away from that supposed synonym of a spiritual retreat—the very

reasoning behind "Peachland Village," the paraphrasing title in the first place. For Chinese readers, Peachland Village immediately recalls the renowned fable, *The Peach Blossom Land (tao hua yuan ji)* written by Chinese poet and politician, Tao Yuanming in 421 CE.

It was precisely Skinner's book that Miao Ying picked and used to tame AI. Some of the other "feeds" include the bossy-core, S&M, romantic online novels (translated from Chinese into English), prayer books, and Chinese & American ideological texts. "[This film, *Surplus Intelligence*] is almost like a simulation, like if *Walden Two* ran for many, many versions," said the artist.[1] Through its delivery, this film neatly reveals that the utopia depicted by Skinner is in fact a dystopia. In an interview with WIRED Magazine, Miao introduced her collaboration process with GPT-3 on the film script: "GPT-3 generated a short story at first. Computer science graduate students Michael Barron and Benjamin Hwang worked with me to break it down into parts and fed it back to GPT-3 to develop more from it, which later became the chapters in the film, and we selected what made the most sense from each variation. Once we had the script, I made the visuals. [...] I think GPT-3 is developing really fast. When I started working with GPT-3's predecessor GPT-2 in 2019, it couldn't write a coherent story. Just a year or two later, it's much more advanced."[2]

Webpage Base: Counterfeit Landscapes and Nonsense Narratives

"Conundrums" presented at the gallery space of M+ has provided us with the resulting cooperation, which is not easy to accomplish. Miao Ying once said: "An artist should adjust the method in new relationships."[3] Now looking back at her creative career, we can see she did complete her demonstration of it, by always staying keen on the constantly emerging phenomena online. In the 2014 solo show, "gif. ISLAND" (V Art Centre, Shanghai), Miao used imagery of everyday technology such as .gifs, memes, selfie perfecting Apps for smartphones, and the visual of iPhone screen. This exhibition marked her deliberation on the Chinese Internet, and its netizens' astonishing creativity and humor though under harsh surveillance, as well as the first establishment of her term, "Chinternet". The 2016 solo show, "Content Aware" (MadeIn Gallery M50, Shanghai) extended the aesthetics of graphic editing and established "Practical/Half-Assed Aesthetics" for an era of "super-amateurism," riding on the wind of post-internet art sweeping across the globe and attention economics boosting. Then in the succeeding *Chinternet Plus* in the same year and *Hardcore Digital Detox* in 2018, the compilation of found images from the Internet were joined by other elements like default special effects in PowerPoint, scrolling

1

Jennifer Conrad, "How GPT-3 Wrote a Movie About a Cockroach-AI Love Story", *Wired*, 5 Aug 2022; https://www.wired.com/story/ai-artist-miao-ying-qanda/ [accessed 5 Dec 2022].

2

Ibid.

3

"Miao Ying on 'Content Aware', published on 3 Jul 2016; https://www.artforum.com.cn/interviews/9680, [accessed 11 Dec 2023].

图 7 / Fig. 7
图 14 / Fig. 14

图 6 / Fig. 6
图 12 / Fig. 12

图 12 / Fig. 12 《硬核数据排毒》，2018 年
综合媒体装置，由 M+ 委任创作
加拿大多伦多大学美术馆展览现场，2022 年
图片致谢艺术家与多伦多大学美术馆
Hardcore Digital Detox, 2018
Comprehensive installation, commissioned by M+ Museum
Installation view at Art Museum at the UofT, Toronto, 2022
Courtesy the artist and Art Museum at the UofT

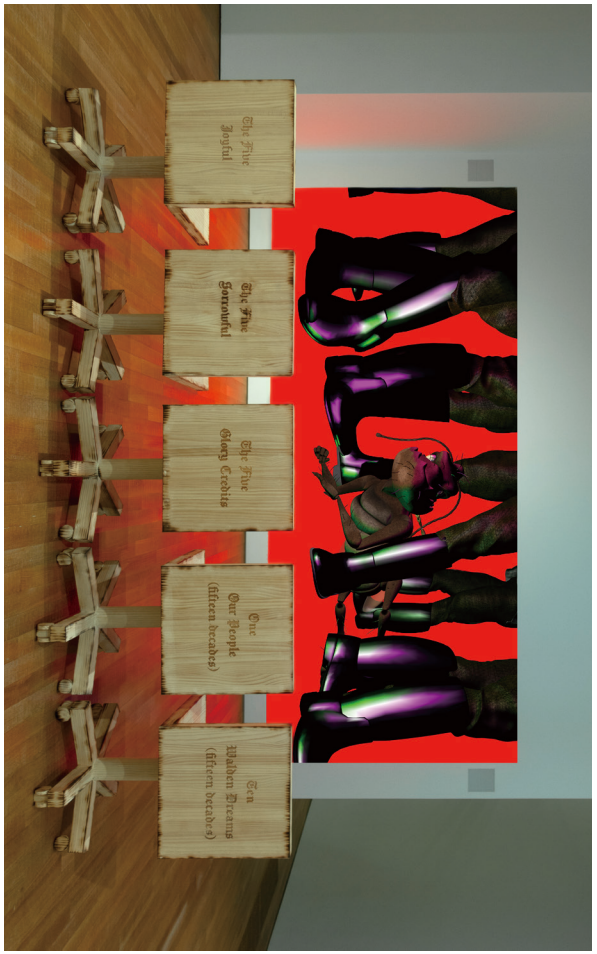

图 11 / Fig. 11 《桃源十二村—第二章：剩余智能》，2021—2022 年
装置，电影（GPT3 人工智能编剧、5K 分辨率、33 分 27 秒），
由博洛尼亚现代艺术博物馆委任创作
M+ 展览现场，2023 年
图片致谢艺术家及 M+
Pilgrimage into Walden XII Chapter II: Surplus Intelligence, 2021–2022
Installation, film(script by GPT3, 5K, 33 min 27 sec), commissioned by Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna
Installation view at M+, 2023
Courtesy the artist and M+

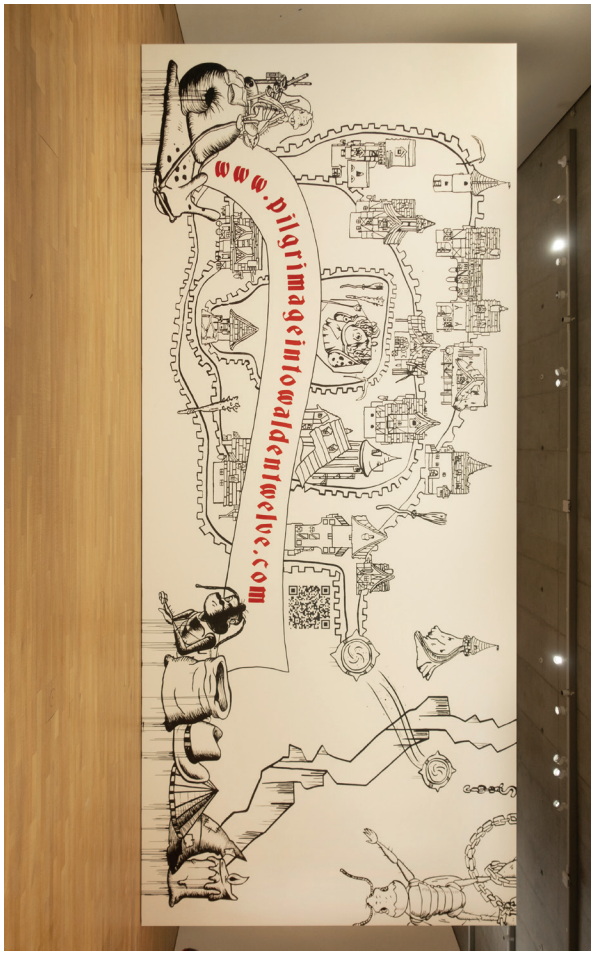

图 10 / Fig. 10 《桃源十二村精神纲要》，2023 年
www.pilgrimageintowaldentwelve.com，互动网站 APP，
手绘壁画，400 × 900 厘米，尺寸可变，由 M+ 委任创作
M+ 展览现场，2023 年
图片致谢艺术家及 M+
Spiritual guide of Walden XII, 2023
www.pilgrimageintowaldentwelve.com, interactive website APP, hand painted mural, 400 × 900 cm, size variable, commissioned by M+
Installation view at M+, 2023
Courtesy the artist and M+

webpage, or VR 3D modeling videos, whereby, the artist was compared to an "editor" of the webs, resourcefully making use of any cyber materials to explore how ideology had been oriented, publicized and implemented on a state level, and how both the cyber environments and individual consciousness had been shaped, under the manipulative language of grandiose companies and major platforms on the Internet out of branding/marketing purposes.

The Miaoist Virtual Universe is constructed by bright colors and blended styles, which are characteristics shared across figures, like the Muscular Shepherds in a Leizhenzi[4] look, or the cute dinosaur-rhino-pigeon chimera with 8 unicorn-corns in the website of *Hardcore Digital Detox*, or the reoccurring folding screens, symbolizing separation and exoticism in many of her shows. Throughout her works, the cheap-looking counterfeit landscapes and slightly mischievous fictional narratives were always there, just like those kitschy, yet, no less original "made-up terms" have been. That "look," seen now as her aesthetic experiment on 3D modeling for games and taming of AI, had its old days "copying" the realistic qualities from cyber pop culture. A decade ago, the 2013–2014 piece, *landscape.gif*, staged an eccentric "dental clinic," where numerous tablet devices and electronic albums in various sizes are mounted to each reclining chair, playing looping pixel videos as a fight/fix-fire-with-fire solution for internet addiction; cables and clamps entangled all around the seats, rendering the impression of some heathenish brainwashing ritual. Another piece from the same period, *APP-nosis*, set up three tent frames, in each lay a square of fake grass, and on top of that lay a pillow customized with snaps from .gifs, while on the wall were projections of blown-up color gradients in the rounded square shape, identical to those icons of iPhone App. Then, adding ocean wave sounds as its soundtrack, the artwork attempted to create a raw experience of immersion and a sublime meditation vibe. Jump to this year—shortly after the opening of Sigg Prize 2023 Exhibition at M+, we'd find Miao Ying's *Technomancy* series, showcased at the solo exhibition "Savage winds, a land of stone, Forsaken intelligence, left alone" which opened at Kiang Malingue Tin Wan Studio, Hong Kong. This series is an iteration of the collaged spectacle of readymades 10 years ago, which has been evolving along her creative development into the real-time/duration infinite simulation programs in deep learning. The alternative, fantastic, virtual world created an anchorage-less sense of time and space within the physical gallery rooms, by building "sites" like Polarized Rift or Lava Pit with landscapes of abstracted forms, way too marvelous that they turned chaotic, and a narrating voice that was neither cheering nor recognizable, so as to guide the viewers to empty their thoughts and enter a serene, ponder-

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A character in the classic Chinese novel *Investiture of the Gods* (*fengsheng yanyi*).

图 9 / Fig. 9

ing state of mind; however, for viewers more experienced in video games and better at using controllers, they might enter the "isekai"[5] created by Miao on the screens, hence to identify the AI "alchemist" that "functioned as a black box beyond its creator—the artist,"[6] behind the ever-changing imagery on the front.

Likewise, the utilization of a scrolling webpage for beading "stories" as a sarcastic parody of reality, can be traced back to *Chinternet Plus* (www.chinternetplus.com). In this website piece, the artist altered the logo of the World Internet Conference—Wuzhen Summit, by replacing the centered colorful ring with a radial, gradient sticker reading as "Page Loading." The whole scrolling webpage, starting with "Our Story" and moving on to "Our Mystery", "Our Goal" ,"Our Vision" and "Our Experience", featured a body of boringly funny intro texts, adapted based on the official narratives in "Internet Plus"—a strategy proposed by Former Premier of China, the late Li Keqiang. Similar adaptations continued in Hardcore Digital Detox two years later: "Need an online break from the dominance of multi-billion dollar businesses like Google and Facebook on the internet? Set your virtual private network (VPN) to mainland China, where these websites and apps are blocked, for a relaxing online retreat!" For the first work in M+'s online series of digital commissions, the museum presented this advertising-style introduction on its official website. Fire against the (Chinternet's) firewall is also the toxin that awaits Digital Detox. Hereby the explorations on both cyber censorship and digital exploitation are connected organically. In one simulation video on www.hardcore-digitaldetox.com, a square-shaped island is floating on the peaceful ocean, the surface of which reflected the stunning glow of sunset. There, a group of servers inhabit the neatly pruned grass and woods. All of these rectangular beings wear the white cloak rippling in the wind, printed with logos from the most famous brands of the world—like some creatures breathing. At the same time, dead bodies after their breath was ceased. Unicorns twinkled amongst them, seeming as calm as they might be dangerous. Such a spectacle of farm simulation could be linked to the personas of "Shepherds" in "Walden XII": To regulate citizens is also to tame them.

The scrolling webpage is carried on as a medium for artmaking in Pilgrimage into *Walden XII* ("www.pilgrimageintowaldentwelve.com). An interface rather easy to access, the website offers a gateway to those who cannot visit the exhibition in person: by simply browsing, you may learn all about Miao Ying's works mentioned above. It is also commonly expected to be frequently updated, as a medium for branding/publicizing, while AI's capacity of real-time digital simulation (RTDS) comes in handy to somehow help with meeting such expectations.

5

Japanese pronunciation for "the other world".

6

https://kiangmalingue.com/exhibitions/miao-ying-savage-winds-a-land-of-stone-forsaken-intelligence-left-alone/ [Accessed 11 December 2023].

图 13 / Fig. 13

《训练地景 #1》, 2023 年
亚麻布油画，160 × 120 厘米
图片致谢艺术家及马凌画廊
Training Landscapes No.1, 2023
Oil on linen, 160 × 120 cm
Courtesy the artist and Kiang Malingue

The term “Net Art”, at first referred to the artmaking that takes cyber contents, as well as the media and language particular to the Internet itself as its materials, whereas gradually, the role of artists could no longer be simply the spectator, who only learned and observed the cyberculture; instead, they inevitably threw themselves into it, acted, performed, and became participants in it.

Born in Shanghai in 1985, Miao Ying grew up with the proliferation of information technology. Her first exposure to the computer was in public school. The perfectly clean lab that must be entered with shoe covers worn, with computers still running on DOS before the graphic user interface. Showing talents and interest in painting at a young age, Miao entered the Department of New Media Art, a freshly opened program at China Academy of Art, Hangzhou in 2003 and joined the first class of the New Media major, taking courses on video, the Internet, animation, sound, interactive installation, photography, and so forth. In 2007, she completed the work, *Blind Spot*, which was a radical take on the censored terms on the domestic Internet, as her graduation piece and the first work directly relevant to the Chinternet in the long run. That was the same year that saw the advent of the iPhone and the pullout of Google from the Chinese market due to internet censorship. After earning her bachelor’s degree, Miao continued her studies abroad in the Department of Electronic Integrated Arts at the School of Art and Design, Alfred University, NY, USA. Her artistic path can also be found in the careers of many other artists of her generation: the one-child policy, financial improvement, art school training, studying abroad, and prosperity in the art world, which altogether led to abundant opportunities for exhibitions, collections, and commissions. Since the turn of the millennium, “new media” established in contrast to the “old media” quartet of traditional Chinese painting, oil painting, printmaking, and sculpture, has become an “old concept.” The once glaring notions of “Internet art” or “post-internet” have faded; terminology and methodology about AI, deep learning, natural language processing (NLP), or RTDS are the new hip. Artworks also transform from featuring objects as “items”—whether real entities or digital assets—to featuring analog “worlds” just like Walden XII did. Rather than fabricating her pink, four-pack, gag-toothed roaches into sculptures, Miao keeps the physical forms in her exhibition more of bare annotation to the digital narratives. In the film *Surplus Intelligence*, the cockroach protagonist sits on a stone at night in the coolness of forested wilderness, whimsically rocking her tiny legs with her red wings folded, making a vulnerable but life-loving, ultimately adorable individual that strives in the imprisoned life under the enclosed, controlled system. And this image has nothing to do with the disgusting, fear-

图 14 / Fig. 14

《亲特网加》，2016 年
综合媒体装置，由纽约新美术馆委任创作
光州双年展展览现场，2018 年
图片致谢艺术家及光州双年展
Chinternet Plus, 2016
Multimedia installation, commissioned by the New Museum
Installation view at Gwangju Biennale, South Korea, 2018
Courtesy the artist and Gwangju Biennale

ful impression of “xiao qiang (meaning ‘Little Strong’),” the everyday slang of cockroach that has become a synonym for the filthy yet unkillable. Rather, in the realm of game engines, the authorship synthesized from the artist and the AI has allowed the protagonist to “live” forever.

“I feel like we’re just data, like cockroaches.”[7] The reasoning behind choosing cockroaches to be the figure was simple for Miao Ying, as the logic was rooted in her understanding and speculation on digital ethics. In the Sigg Prize 2023 Exhibition video, Miao used two words to describe *Walden XII*: “ominous” and “naïve”. “Ominousness” refers to the unknown danger cultivated in distrust towards the information environment and cutting-edge technologies. It is signified by the monopolistic authority of governments and corporations over big data, the new art finance model under the lead of blockchain and NFT, and obviously, the fierce impact in full speed that the prevailing, expanding AI exerts on cyberspaces. “On one hand, I am amazed by the fact that AI is really ‘good’ at generating texts and that it’s still a bit ‘off.’ On the other hand, it’s progressing so fast; having learned everything, all this big data from what existed on the internet, AI throws out its own versions, too. I find ‘history pixelation’ making a lot of sense, and it’s not an exaggeration at all. My concern is that our history is being rewritten so easily that future human generations won’t know what’s true anymore. That’d be a really hard future to imagine.”[8]

“People probably want to believe that they are using tools, instead of the other way around.”[9] This sounds familiar, and it also reveals Miao Ying’s vigilance for the morphing role of an artist: While taming the AI, how can artists avoid the scenario where they actually become the sheep that AI shepherds?

Ling Gu
An active writer, translator, and editor. She endeavours to explore the possibilities of writing on contemporary art.
Translated by Wang Zhuxin

7
Jennifer Conrad, “How GPT-3 Wrote a Movie About a Cockroach-AI Love Story”, *Wired*, 5 Aug 2022; https://www.wired.com/story/ai-artist-miao-ying-qanda/ [accessed 5 Dec 2022].

8
“Miao Ying: Pixelated Pasts”, M+ website, published on 25 Sep 2023; https://www.mplus.org.hk/en/magazine/miao-ying-artist-interview-sigg-prize-2023/ [accessed 11 Dec 2023].

9
“Miao Ying on ‘Content Aware’”, published on 3 Jul 2016; https://www.artforum.com.cn/interviews/9680, [accessed 11 Dec 2023].

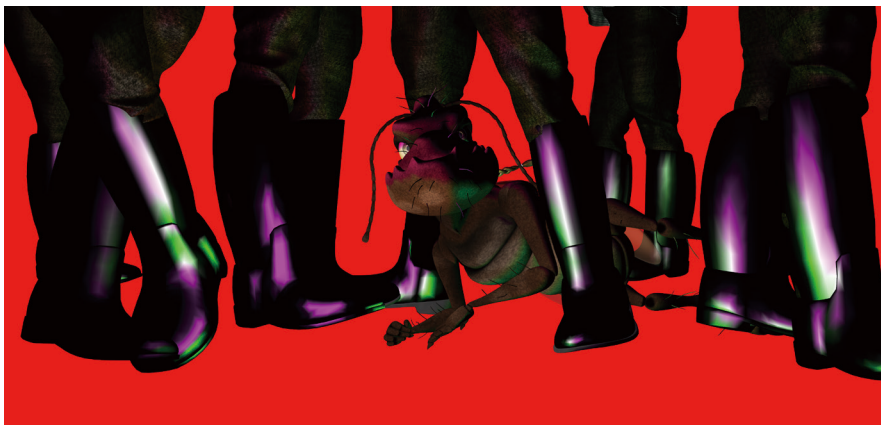

图 15 / Fig. 15 《桃源十二村—第二章：剩余智能》，2021—2022 年
装置，电影（GPT3 人工智能编剧、5K 分辨率、33 分 27 秒），由博洛尼亚现代艺术博物馆委任创作
图片致谢艺术家、博洛尼亚现代艺术博物馆及马凌画廊
Pilgrimage into Walden XII Chapter II: Surplus Intelligence, 2021–2022
Installation, film(script by GPT3, 5K, 33 min 27 sec), commissioned by Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna
Courtesy the artist, Kiang Malingu and Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna

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