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Fictioning as Method: Constructing Mythologies and The Other Story

以虛構為方——展覽「神話的建構」與「知其二」

By Christie Lee

As Simon O'Sullivan says in *Myth-Science and the Fictioning of Reality*, the power and function of contemporary art have always been in summoning forth the thing that has "yet-to-come". In an era of post-truth and alternative facts, when it appears increasingly difficult to sift through deluge of materials on social media and arrive at the truth, and when reality has become stranger than fiction, where does that leave contemporary art?

Simon O'Sullivan 在《神話科學及現實的虛構》中說道：「當代藝術的力量和功用總是用以召喚那些『尚未到來』的事情。」身處一個「後真相」和「另類事實」的時代，我們愈發艱難地去過濾社交媒體所產生的鋪天蓋地的訊息，愈發難以抵達真相，當現實變得比小說更離奇，當代藝術將走向何處？

香港當期的兩個展覽——馬淩畫廊的「神話的建構」以及凱倫偉伯畫廊的「知其二」或許能為此提供些線索。乍看，兩場展覽的呈現方式似乎各有差異。







Two recent Hong Kong shows, *Constructing Mythologies* at Edouard Malingue Gallery and *The Other Story* at Karin Weber Gallery, might provide some clues. At first glance, the two shows seem to take different approaches – curated by Caroline Ha Thuc, *Constructing Mythologies* tells of the myths, be it from folklore or constructed by official authorities, that penetrate Southeast Asia, while Ying Kwok's *The Other Story* asks that we ignore the fictitious aspect of art for a moment to focus on the process of art-making. But both shows bring to the fore the importance of fictioning, the idea of venturing beyond oneself into the unknown.

Upon entering *Constructing Mythologies*, viewers encounter two walls dressed in flimsy yellow squares. A caption reveals them to be Truong

Cong Tung's *Traces of overthrow*, conceived from plastic fertiliser bags. On the squares are written such phrases as "12 universe month = 26,000 years", coaxing us to reconsider our preconceived notions about time, most of which are derived from the Gregorian calendar. Between these two walls lies the artist's *From the primitive to the civilised*, a freakish mess of rocks, gooey-looking beehive, wood, green camo-print shirt and antenna that tells a tale of the intrusion of man upon nature but also represents a visceral collapse of different spatial and temporal worlds, opening up a space for viewers to consider the surrounding world in a new light.

Fictioning is also manifested in Khvay Samnang's *Preah Kunlong*, in which elephant mask-donning beings are seen dancing and posing against a



Above, left, and previous spread
Installation view of *Constructing Mythologies* at Edouard Malingue
Gallery, Hong Kong, 2018. Photo: Kwan Sheung Chi.
Courtesy the artists and Edouard Malingue Gallery.

由Caroline Ha Thuc 策展的「神話的建構」講述了東南亞普遍流傳的民間及官方版神話故事；而郭瑛策劃的「知其二」則要求我們暫時忽略藝術的虛構面，轉而關注創作的過程。但兩者同時將虛構的重要性帶到台前——關於超越自身、大膽挺近未知地帶的理念。

走進「神話的建構」展廳，觀眾迎面遇見兩面用黃色方形薄紙裝點的牆。標題指示，此為張公松以塑膠化肥袋為構思的作品《推翻的痕跡》。這些正方形上寫著諸如「12宇宙月=26,000年」的語句，勸誘我們重新思考關於時間的預設概念，而這些先入為主的觀念大多起源於西曆。兩面牆之間擺放著作品《由原始到文明》。它的構成物包括一團亂糟糟、奇形怪狀的岩石，表面黏黏的蜂箱，木頭、綠色迷彩印花T恤和天線，敘述了人類闖入自然的故事，同時也象徵著不同時間和空間下世界出自內心的崩塌。作品為觀眾打開一個空間，以全新的角度思考周遭世界。

虛構也體現在科威·森南的作品《靈性之路》中。在一篇繁茂的大自然背景中，一群帶著大象面具的生物正跳著舞。作品借此向柬埔寨的闖族社群致敬，此少數民族以萬物有靈的信仰而為人認識。森南的藝術創作源於經歷，源於軀體與自然環境碰撞出的種種際遇

曾翠珊在凱倫偉伯畫廊展出的作品《呼/吸》與之遙相呼應。作品中的一男一女在繁茂的森林中翩翩起舞，男人追逐著女人，女人悄然躲開。某一刻，鏡頭將男人放大，只見他正輕撫著一棵樹，溫柔地吻它。這是個關於男人與女人間的愛情故事，也是他們和環境間的愛情故事。

越南藝術家、美國錄影和表演藝術先鋒人物瓊·約拿斯的門徒潘濤阮在《熱帶午睡》中質疑了事實和信以為的真相是如何被建構的。這個雙軌裝置作品玩味法國耶穌會傳教士Alexandre de Rhodes在《東京王國的歷史》中的浪漫化敘事。時長14分鐘的錄影中，一群越南學校的孩子們重新演繹了小說中的場景：《罪與罰》片段中，孩子們穿過綠色田野中的稻田和



Be Born by Tsang Tsui Shan, Slide, colour coated steel LED lightbox, 53 x 80 cm, 2018.
Courtesy the artist and Karin Weber Gallery.



Breathe In Breathe Out by Tsang Tsui Shan, Single-channel HD video, 10min 31sec, 2015.
Courtesy the artist and Karin Weber Gallery.



Stabbing by Tsang Chui Mei, Acrylic on canvas, 61 x 122 cm, 2018.
Courtesy the artist and Karin Weber Gallery.





Still from *Tropical Siesta* by Phan Thao-Nguyen. Two channel video installation, HD, color, sound, 14 min, 2017. Courtesy the artist and Edouard Malingue Gallery.

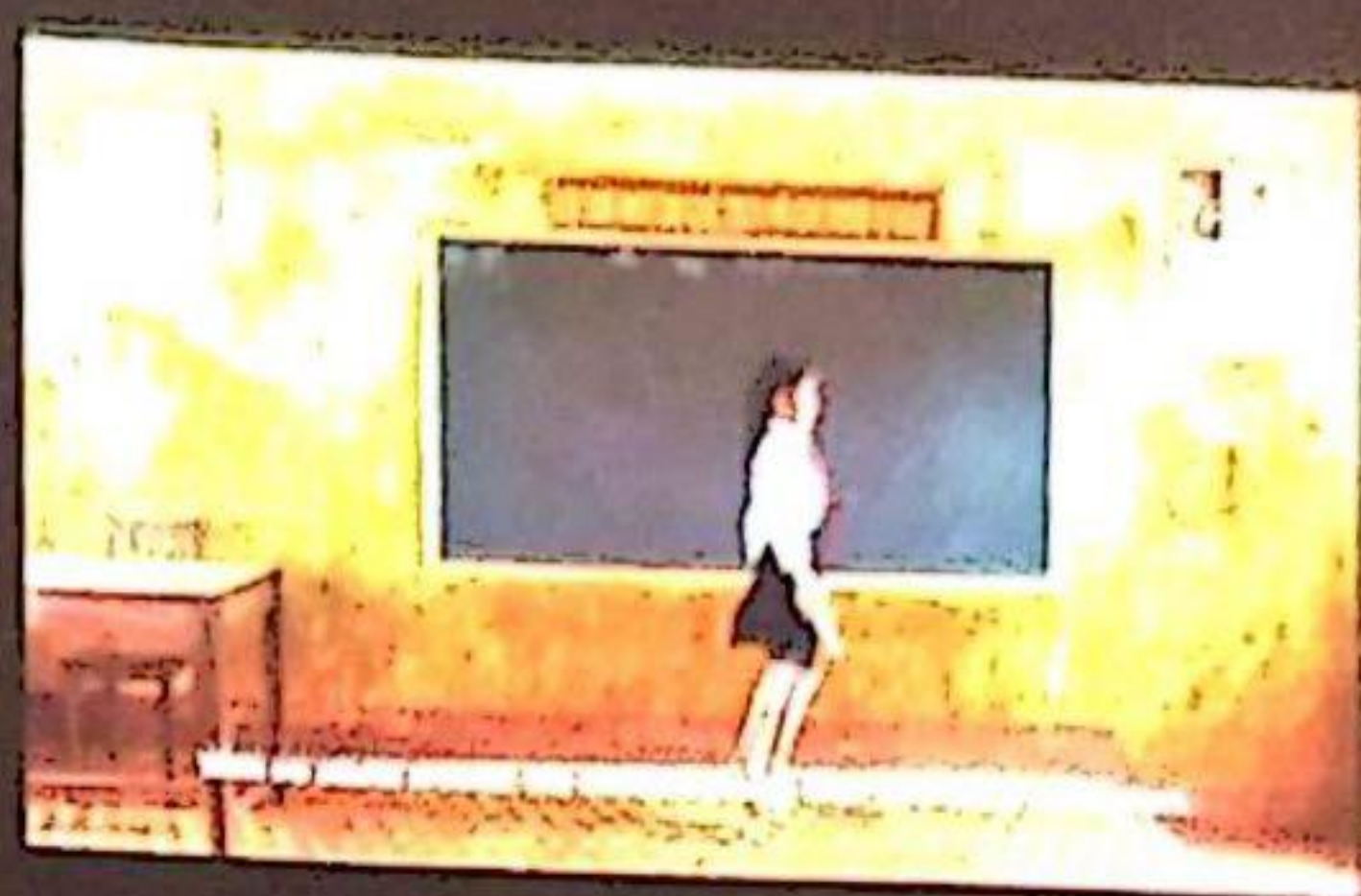
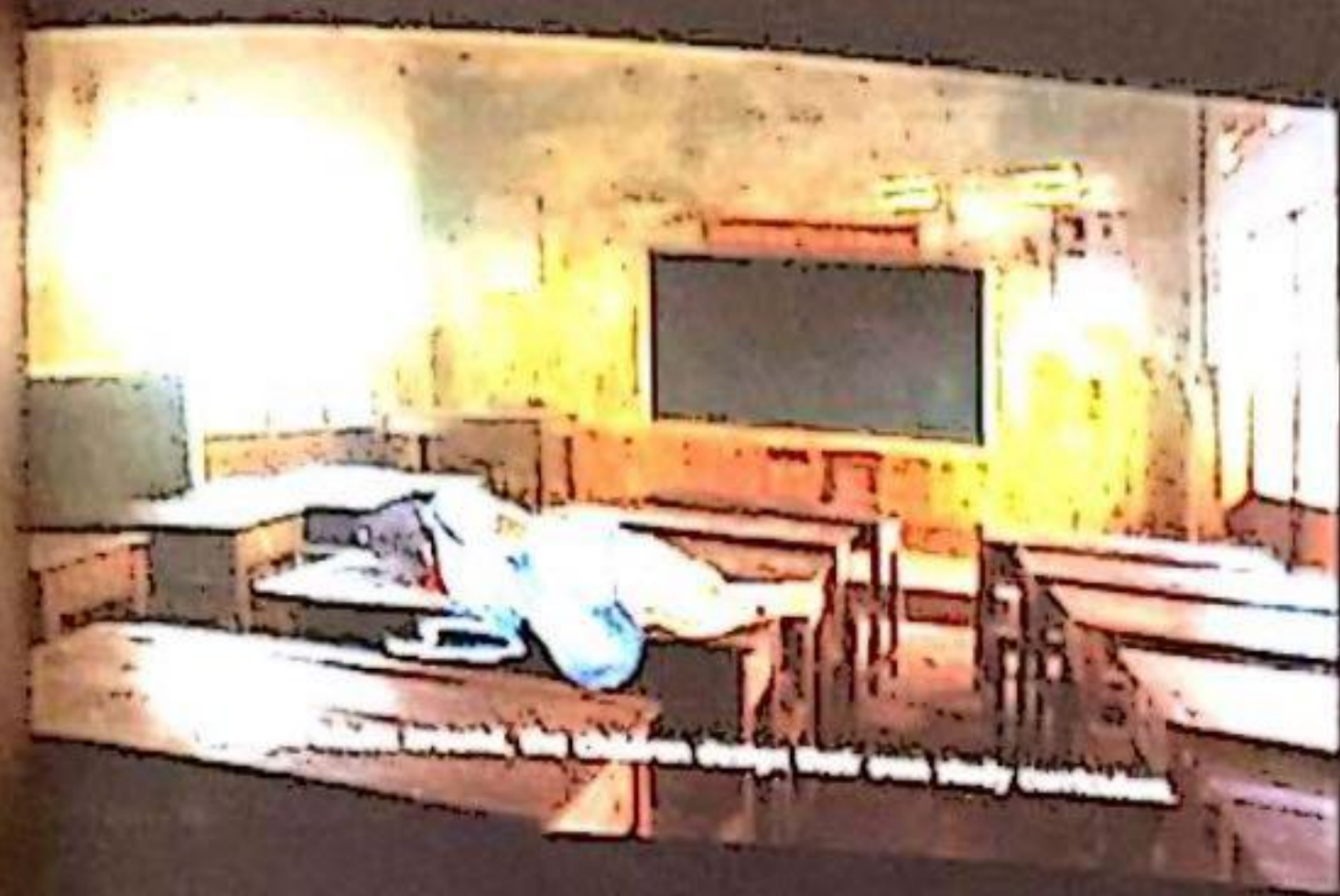
luxuriant natural background. It's a tribute to the Cambodian Chong community, an ethnic minority known for its animist beliefs. Samnang's art is derived from experience, from the myriad of encounters one's body has with its natural surroundings.

This is echoed in Jessey Tsang Tsui-shan's *Breathe In/Breathe Out* at Karin Weber Gallery, where two figures, a man and a woman, are seen dancing in a lush forest, with the man then chasing the woman and the woman pulling away. At one point, the camera zooms into the man, who is gently stroking and kissing a tree. It's a love story, not just a between man and a woman, but also with their surroundings.

Vietnamese artist Phan Thao Nguyen, a protege of the American video and performance-art pioneer Joan Jonas, questions how facts and what is taken as the truth are constructed in *Tropical*

Siesta, a two-channel installation that ruminates on the romanticisation of French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes' *History of the Kingdom of Tonkin*. In the 14-minute video, a group of Vietnamese school children reenact different scenes inspired by novels: the *Crime and Punishment* snippet sees the children walk among rice paddies, narrow waterways in green fields, with a wooden ladder meant to symbolise a shackle fastened over their heads; while the *Tale of the Water Goddess* sees a girl, decked in thin yellow garb, half submerged in a swamp, eyes staring emptily at the sky, pointing to the disconnect between de Rhodes' narrative and the reality of Vietnamese life for these children.

Towards the end, the same group of children pelt a classmate supposedly dressed up as the French Jesuit with white chalk, a copy of the *History of the Kingdom of Tonkin* in his hand. A defiant response to de Rhodes' romanticisation



Still from *Tropical Siesta* by Phan Thao-Nguyen, Two channel video installation, max color, sound, 14 min, 2017
Courtesy the artist and Edouard Malingue Gallery.

狹窄的水道，其中的木梯象徵著綁在他們頭上的枷鎖；《水神的傳說》裡，一個穿著黃色單薄服飾的女孩半身浸沒在沼澤中，她的眼睛空洞地凝視著天空，作品直指de Rhode的浪漫敘述與越南兒童現實生活的脫節。

錄影最後，這組孩子向裝扮成法國耶穌會傳教士的同學扔白粉筆，他的手中拿著一本《東京王國的歷史》。這是以挑釁的方式回應de Rhodes對越南歷史的浪漫化敘述，是勝利的時刻。但明顯的是，孩子們仍然對他們這段經潤色的歷史著迷。錄影沒有直接摒棄de Rhodes的敘述，而是關注為何一個國家的歷史記錄總是被形形色色的力量所影響，以及保護某一敘述並不意味著摧毀另一種敘述。

多層面歷史的概念也體現在一系列描繪廚房、霧景、自動扶梯和會議室的畫作中。這些畫作的中心有一把似乎不屬於此場景的梯子，它仿佛來自另一個維度、另一時間點。濤阮的繪畫看起來層層疊疊，像是一層還未添加先前一層已被抹去，從而呈現出一絲怪誕的效果，令人聯想起希臘式的重寫本。

用以消除神話和現實界限的特權與異質性較於單一性的特權息息相關。在潘氏的畫作中，看似無關的元素實際相互交織，它們相互對抗，相互滲透。新的圖層在解構上一圖層的同時也在挖掘先前的軌跡，最終繪畫成為新與舊的碰並。

曾翠薇在展覽《知其二》所呈現的筆觸鮮明的畫作中同樣蘊含了重寫本的概念。阮氏的繪畫清淡，而曾氏的《燃燒，刺傷，咆哮》系列顏色鮮豔，充滿活力。繪畫一層又一層地疊加——玻璃屑在雪花中，雪花穿過夢幻般風景：意識中的破裂。

卓思穎的作品《我很好，不錯，很快樂》凸顯了對此種破裂的抵禦。懸掛在半空中的印表機打出一長卷紙，上面寫著「我很好，不錯，很快樂」。作品批判當代社會對幸福的迷戀。與此同時，作品《不安的沉思》在梳粧檯前整齊地放著一面旋轉鏡，一個隱約缺失的「我」縈繞其中。旋轉鏡通常用來梳妝，但在此處程式設定它不停地旋轉，從而使得觀眾甚至無法從鏡中匆匆瞥見自己的身影。他們的存在陷入了神話和現實間的闕限空間中。



I Am Fine, I Am Good, I Am Happy by Chloe Cheuk, Printer, paper, plexiglass, metal, motor, size variable, 2018. Courtesy the artist and Karin Weber Gallery.

of Vietnamese history, it's a moment of triumph, but it's also clear that children remain fascinated by such embellished accounts of their own history. Rather than outright rejection of de Rhodes' account, the film focuses on the inevitability of how the history of a country is always shaped by myriad of forces, and how the protection of one narrative doesn't necessarily mean the destruction of another.

The idea of multi-layered history is also seen in a series of paintings that variously depict a kitchen, a foggy scene, an escalator and a conference room. At the centre of these paintings is a ladder that appears not to be part of the scene, as if

it is from another dimension or point in time. Nguyen's paintings look layered, as if one layer has been scrubbed off before another layer was added, resulting in a light, eerie effect reminiscent of Greek palimpsests.

The privileging of erasing the line between myth and reality goes hand in hand with the privileging of heterogeneity over monotony. In Phan's paintings, seemingly unrelated elements are interwoven, competing with and infiltrating each other. At the same time as the upper layer is deconstructing previous layers, it is also excavating traces of it, with the final painting becoming a coalescence of the old and new.

The idea of the palimpsest also underlies Tsang Chui Mei's bright lashes of paint in *The Other Story*. Whereas Nguyen's paintings are light, Tsang's *Blazing, Stabbing, and Roaring* series is colourful and exuberant. Lashes of paint are piled atop one another, glass shards in a snowflake motif cutting through dreamy landscapes: a rupture in the conscious mind.

Resistance to such ruptures punctuates Chloe Cheuk's *I Am Fine, I Am Good, I Am Happy*. Hanging in mid-air, a printer ejects a long scroll of paper bearing the phrases "I am fine, I am good, I am happy" – a critique of contemporary society's obsession with happiness. Meanwhile, the looming absence of an "I" haunts the artist's *Restless Reflection*, in which a swivel mirror is neatly placed on a dresser. A swivel mirror is normally used for make-up rituals, but in this case it's been programmed to swivel endlessly, preventing viewers from catching even a glimpse of themselves. Their very existence becomes caught in the liminal space between myth and fact.