

## "Synesthesia"

**Participating Artists:** Liu Dao 六岛, Wang Dongma 王东马, Rose Tang 罗丝唐, Bing Bing 兵冰, Cai Duobao 蔡多宝, Thomas Charvériat, Manels Favre, Nick Hersey, Tom Lee Pettersen, Li Lingxi 李翎溪, Felix Luque, Chaim Gebber, Zane Melleupe, Wu Yandan 吴艳丹, Yang Longhai 杨龙海, Zhang Deli 张德丽, Zou Susu 邹林峰

**Curator:** Thomas Charvériat

**Art Director:** Zane Melleupe

**Exhibition:** June 13<sup>th</sup> 2009 to July 13<sup>th</sup> 2009

**Opening:** June 13<sup>th</sup> 2009 at 8PM

**Venue:** **island6 Arts Center**, 50 Moganshan Rd, bldg #6, 2F, Shanghai 200060, PRC

"Synesthesia" is a first in a series of exhibitions organized by **island6** over the next five months that focuses on the way in which studies of consciousness have inspired artworks created by the collective Liu Dao. Following this first show will be exhibitions exploring themes such as paranormal studies, ethnopharmacology, evolutionary theory, lucid dreaming and finally an exhibition on the various ways that artists have expanded and dealt with the notion of time in relation to different states of consciousness. The series will begin to cover the major approaches in consciousness studies, including psychology, parapsychology (in particular hypnosis, hallucination, automatic writing and hyperesthesia), philosophy, artificial intelligence, cognitive science, neuroscience and spiritual approaches.

Consciousness is a new and multidisciplinary subject and artists, cognitive scientists, philosophers, psychologists and shaman use the word "consciousness" in very different ways. Issues of practical concern include whether consciousness is attributed to language or if it is an evolutionary trait; whether animal consciousness exists and if so how it can be measured and whether computers can achieve conscious states. For the artists forming the collective of Liu Dao, art has a distinctive role to play in the depository of knowledge and they feel that artists can make an important contribution to scientific practices, as they sensitize the population to scientific experiments usually beyond their comprehension, as well as proposing new insights and perspective on its drawn conclusions. The strength of the exhibitions presented at island6 relies on simple and fully nuanced illustrative representation sparking off the study of consciousness. Like Paul Feyerabend in "Against Method", island6's artists believe that non-scientific methods, such as art, philosophy and religion contribute to our understanding of life and reality, and that art and science, as a combined field, can serve as a tool for better understanding of the world around us.

The series begins with "Synesthesia" (the term describes a neurological condition in which one sense is experienced as another) as a means of showing how artists use creative techniques to direct our attention to a singular perceptual experience. Artists will explore the experiences of different senses through dance performance, audio mapping, interactivity and other technologies to produce work that evokes a multi-sensory experience. Most of us assume that everyone sees and hears things the same way that we do, but how do visual artists represent sounds or noise? What does it mean to smell colors? How do artists represent pain or pleasure? How does sculptors represent taste?

Neuroscience is beginning to unravel the mysteries and mechanisms of such sensory phenomenon and several scientific hypotheses have been proposed to explain these insights. In this exhibition, we will explore "synesthesia" as the result of visual hallucinations during the stage of hypnagogia, through the juxtaposition of artworks and scientific material. Also known as waking-sleep, hypnagogia is a documented physiological condition in which a person is partway between sleeping and waking. "During hypnagogia, a person can be conscious and aware of their environment, but also in a dream-like state where they can perceive images from their subconscious. Hypnagogia is sometimes known as 'the faces in the dark phenomenon' because those who experience this state commonly report seeing faces while experiencing waking-sleep." (McKellar Peter: *"Imagination and thinking: A psychological analysis"*) "You are in bed, your eyes are closed; you feel yourself drifting toward sleep. Light penetrates the eyelids, making the patterns of blood flow through them visible. You see geometrical pattern, or the semblance of some object. You hear voices. Then the faces begin to appear..."

For those who think that consciousness is just a word used to describe being awake, this series of exhibitions will, without a doubt, be an eye-opener.

### About Us

Founded in 2006, island6 Arts Center is a not-for-profit, artist run organization in Shanghai, P.R.C **island6's** mission is to provide a forum for contemporary artists whose works explore social, aesthetic, and philosophical issues. Since April 2006, **island6 Arts Center** has shown 198 artists from 21 different countries, sponsored 110 resident artists, organized 37 exhibitions and helped in the creation of 1900 art projects. In 2007 **island6 Arts Center**, under the artistic direction of Thomas Charvériat & Zane Melleupe, founded Liu Dao, a collective of emerging Chinese artists. Liu Dao explores the cultural potential in the convergence of art, technology and science, and their discoveries are applied to the development of the artist community.