

Zou Susu 邹林峰: Self-Quest

The Guizhou-born multimedia artist, Zou Susu 邹林峰, is something of a polymath. He fields questions of identity, of the self and spiritual inclinations with a display of technological command and diversity. His video art, laser and LED installations, soundscapes and multimedia collages are interspersed with characters, phrases, portraits and images, which combine to stun the senses.

The artist was a key figure in the organization of the **"Remote/Control"** interactive multimedia exhibition held at MOCA (Shanghai, 2007) and has been an active member of **island6Lab**. Working in concert with principal artists **Yang Longhai**, **Thomas Charvériat** and **Zane Melleupe**, he has brought life to virtual creativity with an open spirit. His talents have won the young artist participation in the French Festival "Nuit Blanche" and the 2008 edition of the Roma Contemporary Art Fair.

As well as being an active presence in all dimensions of the continually open **island6Lab**, his work denotes perhaps a more subtle command of technology than that of his colleagues. The bold and extreme nature of Chinese contemporary art has long proven to be a point of fascination for local and foreign audiences alike, yet Zou Susu's work depicts a more intimate and individualistic orientation as he strives to combine light and shadow in a personal artistic quest.

His mediums are far removed from traditional Chinese culture, yet the recurrent sense of spiritual gain/loss, self/society appears to indicate an extenuation of the predominant themes of the century. The advent of mass-industrialization and post-modernist currents of alienation, erasure and identification were late to emerge in the PRC. With the acuity of savage capitalist growth, the pervasive and overwhelming impact of new electronic and virtual technologies, Zou seems to have captured the inner cry of his generation without falling into the pitfalls of arrogance or self-proclamation.

One of the most striking of his works was an exterior laser projection upon the facade of a half-demolished building standing roughly a kilometer from the premise of **island6**, equidistant to the shores of the Suzhou River. Part of the 2006 exhibition **"Untitled Santa"**, *'Six Characters'* exposed the bleak and dismal architectural remains of a building of the past in sharp contrast to the gentrified "heritage" turn of the century warehouses and moreover, the modern towering condominiums on the opposite shore. Reminiscent of a lighthouse signal, the intense neon green beacon cast incandescent light across the landscape of wild grass, broken concrete and dredged land. Six Chinese Characters were emblazoned on the face of a structure, which the artist and crew of the **island6Lab** had witnessed in a state of gradual decay and erosion. Zou effectively pulled the immediacy of destruction and ephemerality into a singular instance of technological creativity.

Working within a spatial confine on the work *'Mandone'*, chosen for the **Bits, Bytes & Pixels** exhibition of 2007 at **island6**, the artist projected the words "...I Love" upon a transparent Lambda print in a darkened environment. The image caught in the print seems as rigid or bound as a subject who might sit for a daguerreotype at a distance seemingly dark and stoic, and the crude graphic quality of the "virtual bubble" which carries the message of love (or does it?) gives a contrastive stroke to the work. The layering of imagery, sensitivity to light and paradoxical game of relief and polarity underscores a concept both impulsive and simple. The collective experience is not at all new to the youth of quasi-socialist China, yet the spirit of invention and original production channeled through **island6** has proven to be fertile ground for the artist. Having grafted himself from academia and the southwest to the mega city of Shanghai, he has found a new shore of inspiration. Zou did not succumb to any internal retreat, or insulate himself from the impact of the cityscape by an artifice born of the mind. Levity and profound instance are extemporized in his constant examination, questioning and redefinition of self with the advent of technology acting not as a detached intellectual schemata, but rather a tool in hand for his own remarkable translation of experience.

R A Suri - 05.25.2008