



La Biennale di Venezia

58. Esposizione
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d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

Pavilion of the People's Republic of China at the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

China Pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition, titled “Re-睿”, is organized by China Arts and Entertainment Group Ltd. (CAEG). The project for China Pavilion, curated by Wu Hongliang, selects the works from four artists — Chen Qi, Fei Jun, Geng Xue and He Xiangyu. The Exhibition will be open to the public from May 11 to November 24, 2019.

From “Re” to “睿” Thinking

The theme of China Pavilion, “Re-睿”, derives from rethinking the 58th International Art Exhibition’s title – May You Live In Interesting Times. The phrase “interesting times” does mean something in the first half of the 21st century. From media coverage to our daily lives, every “I” could feel more or less as if human beings are starting to face “new problems”.

Facing the “interesting times” we have walked into, we discovered “Re-睿”. “Re”, a frequently applied prefix in vocabularies of Western languages that means “back, or backward”, constitutes a backtracking dynamic with the suffix. “睿” (rui), a Chinese word sharing the similar pronunciation, indicates wisdom. Facing today’s “new problems”, maybe we have to look back to gain insights from “Re” and “睿”. Therefore, curator Wu Hongliang hopes to create a path for viewers to return to their true hearts through exhibiting both the virtual and real worlds. The rhythm of space at the exhibition hall resembles a handscroll of Chinese painting. What’s interesting about the hall design is that it does not give you a sweeping view—it sometimes makes you feel cramped, and yet sometimes wide-open and clear. Only when you roam through the hall and get fully immersed, can you feel and read the exhibits.

Looking for China Pavilion in Venice

China Pavilion is located in the deepest part of the Arsenale Area. In Venice, one could easily get lost between winding alleys and intricate waterway bridges. Artist Fei Jun develops a mobile application to present his work “Re-Search”, which supports navigation function and gives hints at some bridges around China Pavilion, guiding the viewers to China Pavilion. After entering China Pavilion, viewers need to walk through a long and narrow passage, the right side of which stands a mottled old brick wall of the historical building of armory, while the left side is a growing virtual world that interacts with viewers and players. In this simple yet intricate “Interesting World”, entanglements and symbiotic relationships exist; objects are connected by bridges and communicate with each other.

Walking past the game world where history confronting with future, an open small square suddenly jumps into the viewers’ eyes. Moving to stand on a narrow bridge on the side of the square, viewers are able to overlook artist Geng Xue’s video art work, “The Name of Gold”, from the highest point of the exhibition hall. Displayed on a large screen, 10 meters wide by 4 meters high, an absolute black-and-white world depicted in the video presents this female artist’s care for the origins and circles of life. At the ending, a golden ship floating from the nothingness echoes several golden devices on the ground that look like water splashes or umbilical cords, among which a golden person is floating, decomposing and disappearing...Water is the subject of this area. Whether you are on or under the bridge, you can see artist Chen Qi’s work, “The Born and Expansion of 2012”, a large-scale, super-realistic, Chinese traditional style black-and-white woodblock

print. If you come closer, you may even feel yourself being immersed in the water waves on the print, with ripples spreading in your body and mind.

Then, viewers can cross the bridge and walk along a narrow lane into a completely unexpected pink space. This is the work of artist He Xiangyu's art installations, "Everything we have created is not ourselves", which visualizes the tactile sensations inside bodies. The artist touches his palate with tongue and later translates the shape felt by his tactile sense into bronze sculptures. He has continued to visualize his body perception over the years, as if it is a daily lesson. Viewers can sit down and touch those sculptures, thereby sharing the artist's tactile sensation.

Now is the time for viewers to experience the wonder of the garden space. They can cross the pink space and pass through an arch back to the small square where Geng Xue's work is exhibited; or they can turn back to the exit under the bridge and then turn right, finding themselves in a space dappled with light coming through the etched holes above their heads. This is artist Chen Qi's space installation, "Elsewhere". The forms of light and shadow are inspired by the holes in ancient books bitten by bookworms, a metaphor for the conflict and harmony between human civilization and natural forces. Walking out of this dark alley, viewers enter China Pavilion's outdoor exhibition area in the brilliant sunshine. A huge light pink box sits on the garden's lawn, inside of which is a silent space dappled with sunlight through a "wormhole". It is a gift from China for viewers to enjoy some pleasant moments in this cozy space.

Of course, if a viewer happens to enter China Pavilion from the garden's entrance, he/she can see another scene of the "handscroll of space", which is one of the wonders that China Pavilion designs for its viewers.

Multidimensional Experience Evoked by Interaction

To create and evolve a gravitational field that really inspires public attention, the curator not only focuses on the exhibition itself at China Pavilion, but also considers it as a communication system. He expects that by constructing an exhibition management system, it will integrate artificial intelligence, new media and the traditional logic of the Chinese art, intersect the parallel world, virtual reality to the real world, and thus create a multidimensional experience beyond time and space. "Re" is not only the reflection and self-expression of Chinese artists in response to history, society and the current "interesting times", but also the exploration of new kinetic energy in terms of techniques, styles, themes and concepts. The power of art is demonstrated as insight and influence on the world, which also depends on viewers' understanding of the specific details in its form and content. Therefore, techniques are particularly important in exploring profound perceptions. The use of new techniques is not only for the purpose of enhancing the viewers' experience and sense of participation, but more importantly to address the language and cultural expressions of contemporary art, to allow different audiences to reach consensus on common cognitive problems. After the Biennale Arte 2019, there will be many itinerant exhibitions in China.

In conclusion, with the advent of the era of globalization, different countries, nationalities and cultures are facing the escalation of certain common problems. The Chinese Pavilion uses the interactive experience to highlight this commonality and the humanistic spirit of artistic ontology. The achievements in different fields are integrated into the artworks and the exhibition, which perfectly reconcile the East and the West, the traditional and the contemporary, the virtual and the real, to construct a field of perception for viewers to think about themselves as well as the world and the "interesting times".

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China Pavilion at Biennale Arte 2019
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