

高磊 | OH! 河马在他们的坦克里煮沸了
2021.9.11-10.28

空白空间高兴地宣布，高磊的第四回个展《OH! 河马在他们的坦克里煮沸了》将在 2021 年 9 月 11 日开幕并持续至 10 月 28 日，展出艺术家于近期的全新创作。

1945 年，彼时还未成为垮掉派领军人物的威廉·巴勒斯和杰克·凯鲁亚克两人，基于哥伦比亚大学里酒醉后发生的情杀案件，共同交替写作了侦探小说《而河马被煮死在水槽里》（*And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks*）。这一颇显荒诞意味的题目来自凯鲁亚克在写作过程中于广播中听到的一则真实新闻：马戏团发生了大火，而河马被煮死在水槽里。

本次展览的标题《OH! 河马在他们的坦克里煮沸了》是艺术家于 2019 年使用谷歌人工智能翻译软件对上述小说英文标题进行翻译偶然获得的。在软件的迭代过程中，这一错译已被更正。尽管对比原标题，这一因缺陷算法带来的错译文本显得更加荒诞无稽，却也呈现出某种意义上颇为惊人的“想象力”与“诗意”。酒后心智失控引发的暴力行为、人工智能面对语言多义性时的力有不逮，尽管这些“生命进化/进程”中遗留的失格、谬误、意外就像是人性中挥之不去的暗箱与灰色地带，但是否也作为人类反观和理解自身打开了更多的缝隙？

在展览《OH! 河马在他们的坦克里煮沸了》中，醒目的蓝色氧气（O）管道与绿色氢气（H）管道分别行动，串联起展览现场；巨大的灰色网格如同“画框”般捕获、凝固了自然与人类工业历史中的某些决定性时刻或重要面向。由此，展厅被艺术家构造成了个人的生物历史博物馆和工业历史博物馆。艺术家分别以“W”和“M”（挪用自小说中两位主角 Will Dennison 和 Mike Ryko，亦是对 Water 与 Machine 的指涉）为两侧的作品编号、建档，观众也需游走、观看，并想象和连接两侧展厅中的作品与其表征的历史切片。

展览伊始，作品《起源》中的单细胞生物群落与海洋波浪共同组成了一颗蓝色星球，也如同一轮镜头光圈叶片，仿佛是对“神说要有光”之时的一次抓拍定格，并以此展开了对古生物演化进程的勘探。右侧展厅以基础工业零件与交通轨道始发，对人类创造发明的工具、交通、武器、工业品乃至数字技术进行探究。两侧展厅中，祈祷中的丢勒之手与形如闪电的自由女神火炬被印刻在大小 Joker 扑克牌面并悬于门梁之上。它们似乎在向我们昭示着，这一切的高光与至暗，仿佛都来自上帝的把戏与玩笑，抑或是全然的意外时刻。

最终，展览将在氧气管道与氢气管道的指引下，交汇在自然（河马）与人工（坦克）的对峙之处。氧和氢两个最为基本的原子，构成了生命存活的基本养分，也带来我们回眸历史、洞悉自身时的一声惊叹或错愕。

关于艺术家

高磊的艺术创作涉及装置、雕塑、摄影及绘画等各类媒介。他在创作中多借用日常物及“标准化”的工业制品为基本元素，这些作品经由合成或抽离的规训化形态处理，在模糊、改造中被篡改或增添了功能、属性与含义，从而成为测量身体、权力、消费与宗教等诸种领域之间的尺度与模型。通过精准的材质测试与图形的矢量化，作品与其面临的对象及试图发出的问题一起在空间维度与观念维度中不断跳转，使观者得以用一种经验之外的标准来重新审视与测量我们与世界固有的边界。

高磊曾于空白空间（中国北京）、阿拉里奥画廊（韩国首尔）、台北当代艺术馆等机构举办个展，其作品亦参展尤伦斯当代艺术中心、上海民生当代美术馆、龙美术馆、油罐艺术中心、昊美术馆、广东时代美术馆、新加坡美术馆、IVAM 现代艺术研究院（西班牙瓦伦西亚）、Tinguely 美术馆（瑞士巴塞尔）、路德维希美术馆（德国科布伦茨）、韩国国立现代美术馆等国际艺术机构之群展。

Gao Lei | OH! And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks
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White Space is pleased to announce Gao Lei's fourth solo exhibition, *OH! And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks*, opening on September 11, 2021, and on view until October 28, showing the artist's most recent works.

In 1945, William Burroughs and Jack Kerouac, who were yet to claim the pioneering roles of the Beat Generation, took turns to write the detective novel *And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks*, based on a drunken love affair at Columbia University. This rather absurd title comes from a real news story Kerouac heard on the radio during the writing process: a circus caught on fire, and the hippos were boiled in their tanks.

The artist accidentally obtained the title of this exhibition *OH! And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks* in 2019 when using Google's AI translation software to translate the English title of the above novel¹. This mistranslation has been corrected in many iterations of the software. As absurd as this title may seem than the original title due to the flawed algorithm, it also reveals an "imaginary" and "lyrical" quality that is quite surprising. The loss of mental control causing violence in a state of inebriation and the artificial intelligence's inability to cope with linguistic nuance may seem like the remnant irregularity and fallacies of "evolutionary/process of life," while random happenings are like the lingering dark box and a gray area of human nature. But does it also open more gaps for human beings to reflect on and understand themselves?

In the exhibition *OH! And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks*, the striking blue oxygen (O) and green hydrogen (H) pipes act separately to link the exhibition site; the huge gray grid serves as a "picture frame" to capture and condense many decisive moments or vital aspects in the history of nature and human industrialization. Thus, the artist constructs the galleries into a personal museum of biological and industrial history. The works on both sides are serialized and filed by the artist with "W" and "M" (an appropriation of the novel's two protagonists Will Dennison and Mike Ryko, also referring to Water and Machine), and the viewer is required to walk around, look, imagine and connect the works in both galleries, and the historical moments they represent.

At the start of the exhibition, the single-celled community of organisms in *Origin* and the ocean waves form a blue planet that looks like a blade on a lens aperture, as if to capture the moment when "God said there must be light," and thus begin an exploration of the evolutionary process of paleontological evolution. The gallery space on the right starts with essential industrial parts and transportation tracks, exploring tools, logistics, weapons, industrial products, and even digital technology created by human beings. In both galleries, the praying hand by Albrecht Dürer and the torch of Lady Liberty, shaped like a lightning bolt, are engraved on the face of Joker cards, large and small, and suspended from the door beams. They seem to suggest that the illuminations and darkness come from God's tricks and jokes, or they are all random moments.

Eventually, the exhibition merges at the confrontation between nature (hippos) and artificiality (tank) under the guidance of oxygen and hydrogen pipelines. The two most basic atoms, oxygen, and hydrogen constitute the essential nutrients for the survival of all living beings. They also bring us astonishments or dismay when we look back into history and introspect ourselves.

1. Due to the multiple meanings of the word, "tank", Google Translate converted "tanks" (the container) to mean combat vehicle in the Chinese title.

About GAO Lei

Gao Lei's art practice spans multiple media, including installation, sculpture, photography, and painting. Gao often adopts everyday objects and "standardized" industrial products as the essential component, whose works are manipulated through synthetic or abstract regulatory forms, in which the functions, properties, and meanings are tampered with or added through blurring transformation. Thus, they become a scale or model for measuring various domains such as the body, power, consumption, and religion. Through precise material testing and vectorization of graphics, Gao's works, along with the objects they confront and the questions raised, alternate between spatial and conceptual dimensions, allowing the viewer to re-examine and remeasure our inherent boundaries with the world using a standard other than that of experience.

Gao's works have been the subject of solo exhibitions at White Space (Beijing, China), Arario Gallery (Seoul, Korea), Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei, etc. His works have also been exhibited in international art institutions including, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Minsheng Art Museum (Shanghai), Long Museum, Tank Shanghai, Hao Art Museum, Guangdong Times Art Museum, Singapore Art Museum, Institute of Modern Art (Valencia, Spain), Tinguely Museum (Basel, Switzerland), Ludwig Museum im Deutschherrenhaus (Coblence, Germany), National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (Korea), and others.