

# screen-skins

## Tishan Hsu

18 March 2023 — 24 June 2023



Empty Gallery is pleased to present *screen-skins*, New York-based artist Tishan Hsu's second solo exhibition with the gallery. Since the 1980s, Hsu's practice has investigated the complex manner in which information technology has altered the affective, perceptual, and political contours of our embodied experience. Continually refining his practice to keep pace with these emergent phenomena, Hsu works between painting and sculpture, employing methods such as UV printing, casting, and digital photo manipulation to create objects which are poised at the limit between the physical and the virtual. *screen-skins* extends a mode of practice first articulated in *delete* and subsequently refined in presentations at the 59th Venice Biennale and Miguel Abreu Gallery, broadening Hsu's scope of inquiry to encompass the expanded sphere of biopolitics and the digital surveillance state.

Comprising six new paintings and a monumental sculpture installed on the 19th floor gallery, the high definition surfaces of the works in *screen-skins* pulsate with a quiet menace. Pieces such as *camera-screen-skin* and *double-breath 1* are defined by an all-over opticality which was first articulated as oscillating scanlines in Hsu's 1980s work— where they denoted a sort of hypnotic or dazed absorption in the illusionistic space of the screen— but has gradually morphed into omnipresent patterns of dots or meshes. These warped topographies express the feeling of a capitulation to or engulfment by a network which is nearly psychedelic in its sense of power and scale. Imbricated within these patterns are elements of representational imagery— fragments of body parts, fleshy folds and mysterious orifices— which in their very anonymity seem to speak to the reduction of the individual subject into abstract units of quantifiable and controllable data. Both emerging from these surfaces and burrowing into, or seeping out of them, are pools of undifferentiated corporeal matter rendered in pigmented silicone. These anatomical eruptions speak to the stubborn persistence of the material body in an era in which it has begun to seem increasingly obsolete. As a whole, these works explore the neuro-biological enmeshment of the contemporary subject within a network which is at once everywhere and nowhere, invisible and yet palpable. They articulate a sort of mundane dystopia, one in which consumption and pleasure— indeed, the ground of experience itself— are inextricably tied to surveillance, the policing of bodies, and more subtle forms of biopolitical control. In this concern with the monitoring and control of bodies, they seem to hearken back to Hsu's work at the end of the 80s, in which the meeting of technological and bureaucratic systems was explicitly articulated for the first time.

Occupying a position of singular importance within the exhibition, *phone-breath-bed 3* is the third in a series of sculptures which Hsu began in 2021. A hybrid construction which combines hospital bed, personal computing device, and life support system, it is perhaps Hsu's most somber exploration of the juncture between devices and bodies. Consisting of a rolling steel armature which cradles both a transparent polycarbonate body punctuated by silicone casts and a touch-screen like printed surface, the work reveals the deeper logics linking the utilitarian concerns of the medical industry to the optimized interfaces of modern UI/UX design. With its exposed cavities and its death-mask like visage, *phone-breath-bed 3* summons up the liminal space where the dissociative effects of corporeal trauma and bodily decline fold into and reinforce the absorptive world of the screen— the uncomfortable intersection between the morgue and the datacenter.

During a historical moment— the 1980s— when many of his artistic peers were still hurriedly playing catch up to the implications of older regimes of image circulation, Hsu's singular focus on the consequences of the then-nascent digital sphere— not as simple fetishism of so-called new media but considered in all of its manifold implications for the shifting nature of human experience— has been aptly described as prescient. His practice represents an ongoing and perhaps, perpetually unfinished attempt to understand and map out the ontology of current experience. Hsu does this not, however, through the studied artifice of the analyst or the fabricated omniscience of the cultural theorist, but through a kind of immanent grasping amidst the flow of bodies and fluids, screens and data. *screen-skins* reconfigures this line of inquiry to resonate with a contemporaneity in which the impulse towards technological optimism is at its lowest ebb. In this state of affairs, the submerged authoritarian aspects of the electronic state are on full display, but the subject is far too enmeshed, both cognitively and physically, to see an alternative. The passage of time thus becomes marked by an oscillation between the seductive fluidity of networked screens and the unwanted consciousness of a corporeal shell which stubbornly continues to exist beyond the point of its own obsolescence. Hsu's practice, perhaps more than that of any other living artist, seems to articulate this precarious and paradoxical status of the object— and perhaps, even matter itself— when confronted with its own participation in a regime of negative virtuality emerging from a Hobbesian cybernetics.

**Tishan Hsu** (b. Boston, Massachusetts), his early years were in Zurich, Switzerland, and Ohio, Wisconsin, Virginia and New York, U.S. Hsu had his first one-person show as a teenager in Roanoke, Virginia, where his paintings were exhibited in museums throughout the region. He received his B.S.A.D in 1973 and M.Arch in 1975 from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. While at MIT, he also studied film and photography at the Carpenter Center, Harvard University. Hsu has resided in New York since 1979. Hsu first showed in New York at the Pat Hearn Gallery. Since 1985, Hsu has shown extensively in the US, Europe, Mexico and Asia, with works in many public and private collections. From 1988-90, Hsu lived and worked in Cologne, Germany and from 2014-16 in Shanghai, China.

Much of the artist's work has attempted to convey the changing cognitive and physical effects of an embodied technology. Hsu's interest in technology has not been in the use of a particular apparatus but the perception of a technological affect. His work has included drawings, paintings, interactive digital media projections, and sculpture.

Selected public and private collections include Metropolitan Museum, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum fur Moderne Kunst (MMK), Frankfurt am Main; High Museum, Atlanta; Terra Museum, Mexico City; Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami; The Rubell Family Collection, Miami; Weisman Museum, Minneapolis; and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Hsu has served as a Member of the Board of White Columns and a Governor for the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. He was a Professor of Sculpture at Sarah Lawrence College and a visiting professor at Pratt Institute and Harvard University. Tishan Hsu: *Liquid Circuit* (2020-21), his first survey exhibition covering the period 1982 to 2002, was curated by Sohrab Mohebbi, and held at SculptureCenter, New York, following its first iteration at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. His work is currently included in the 58th Carnegie International, organized by Sohrab Mohebbi, as well as the 58th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale: "The Milk of Dreams", curated by Cecilia Alemani at Arsenale. He also participated in the *13th Gwangju Biennale*, "Minds Rising, Spirits Tuning," in 2021.

## 皮膚 徐梯善

2023年3月18日至2023年06月24日



Empty Gallery 很高興為大家帶來紐約藝術家徐梯善在畫廊舉行的第二個個展《皮膚》。自1980年代起，徐氏的藝術創作探索訊息科學改變我們具體化經驗中情感、接收及政治輪廓的複雜方式。持續改進創作的實踐以跟上此等湧現的現象，徐氏的作品介乎於繪畫和雕塑，採用方法如UV印刷、鑄造和數碼照片處理創造處於物理與虛擬之間界限的物件。《皮膚》延伸了先是使用於展覽《刪》的創作模式，繼而在第59屆威尼斯雙年展及紐約Miguel Abreu Gallery的展出中更臻完熟，進一步拓寬徐氏的探究範疇以涵蓋生物政治學的擴展場域和數碼監控國家。

由裝置在畫廊19樓空間的六幅新畫作及一個標誌性雕塑組成，展覽《皮膚》中作品的高清表象躍動著一種安靜的威脅感。在作品如〈camera-screen-skin〉和〈double-breath 1〉中定義創作的整體光學性，曾首度在徐氏1980年代的作品中表現為擺動的掃描線（當時它們指向的是一種在屏幕虛幻空間中帶催眠性或暈眩感的吸併），但現已逐漸變形為無處不在的點與網孔。這些扭曲的地勢圖表現出一種降服於網絡或被其吞噬的感覺，而這個網絡在其力量與規模上皆接近迷異的幻覺。在這些圖案中疊蓋的是具像影像元素（身體部份的碎片，肉質褶皺和神秘小孔），它們的匿名性似乎指向把獨立主體簡約為可量化和可控數據的抽象單位這簡化過程。以有色矽膠形塑的未分化肉身物質，從這些表面冒出和鑽入，又或從當中滲出。這些元素訴說著物質軀體在一個它開始顯得日益過時的時代中頑固的存在。在這個時代中它只能以黏稠固態現身，被粒子化卻不能完全分解進符號資本的液態流。作為一個整體，這些作品似乎訴說著一種糾纏，一種來自當代主體置身在一個無處不在、又無處可尋、看不見但摸得到的網絡中，其神經生物學性的糾纏。這些作品表達著一種世俗的反烏托邦主義，在當中消費和愉悅（實際上，經驗自身的基礎）與監視、身體監管和更微妙的生物政治控制形式，皆是密不可分。它們在對身體監控和控制的關注這層面上，可回溯徐氏在1980年代末的作品，當中首次明確地表達了科技系統與官僚系統的交結。

展覽的重點作品〈phone-breath-bed 3〉是早前於第59屆威尼斯雙年展中展出的一系列雕塑作品的第三件。這件混雜結構作品結合醫院病床、個人計算設備和生命維持系統的元素，可說是徐氏對軀體與設備裝置之間的交接最深沉的探索。一個帶輪的金屬支架上躺著一具透明聚碳酸酯軀體，並用上矽膠鑄件和類似觸控屏幕的印刷面作點綴。在作品核心的概念中，是把醫療產業與功利主義考量連接到現代UI/UX設計中優化界面的深層邏輯。〈phone-breath-bed 3〉作品中的人臉（能聯想到死亡面具）與暴露的體腔召喚來闕限空間，在當中軀體創傷和身體衰退的分離效應折疊進及強化了屏幕吸併的世界——數據中心與停屍房之間那不自在的交叉點。

在一個歷史性的時刻（1980年代）當徐氏許多藝術同行仍在匆忙追趕舊有影像循環系統影響之時，他對其時剛出現的數碼領域所會帶來的結果獨度的關注（不是對所謂新媒體單純的拜物主義，而是考慮到它對人類經驗不斷變化本質的多方面暗示）早已冠其先見之譽。

《皮膚》重整這脈絡的探索，冀與科技樂觀主義的脈衝處於最低潮的時刻產生共鳴。在這樣的一個時刻，數碼民主曾被淹沒的威權主義充分顯現，但當中主體過於糾結，過度消化和量化，以致無法看清外界。有一種幾乎是無意識的擺盪，在網絡屏幕誘人的流暢性與有形軀殼多餘的意識之間，越過其自身淘汰而頑固地繼續存在。徐氏的創作或許比任何其他在世的藝術家都更清楚地表達出物件（或許甚至是物質本身）當從一個壓倒性消極政體虛擬地深陷進一種官僚主義控制論而要面對自身糾結之時所處於的這種不穩定和矛盾的狀態。但也許，甚至比這更重要的是，徐氏的創作代表了一種持續不斷卻永遠不會完成的嘗試，試圖理解和規劃當前經驗的本體。然而，不是從一個假構的全知定位或透過一種分析方法的研究手段來實踐，而是作為一種對內在的掌握，在液態流動和身體，數據，與屏幕之間。

徐梯善出生於美國波士頓，童年曾居於瑞士央蘇黎世，美國俄亥俄、威斯康辛、維吉尼亞和紐約。青少年時已在維吉尼亞舉辦首次個人畫展，當中作品更在整個地區的美術館作巡展。1973年畢業於麻省理工學院建築系，1975年完成碩士課程；在麻省理工就讀期間，同時於哈佛大學卡本特視覺藝術中心修讀電影。自1979年起移居紐約生活，在紐約的首個展覽在Pat Hearn畫廊舉行。自1985年起，徐氏的作品曾多次於美國，歐洲及墨西哥展出並為公共機構及私人所收藏。1988年至1990年期間，徐氏曾於德國科隆生活及工作。徐氏大部分的作品試圖傳遞一種具體化的科技，但他對科技的興趣不在於運用某種特定機具而是對科技影響的感知。他作品的類型包括繪畫，數碼媒體計劃及雕塑。徐氏的作品為紐約大都會藝術博物館、巴黎龐比度中心、法蘭克福現代藝術美術館、亞特蘭大High Museum、墨西哥Terra Museum、洛杉磯當代藝術美術館、北邁阿密當代藝術博物館及明尼阿波利斯魏斯曼美術館和紐約惠特尼美術館等所收藏。徐氏曾為White Columns 董事會成員和Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture理事；莎拉勞倫斯學院視覺藝術系教授，普瑞特藝術學院和哈佛大學的訪問教授。《Tishan Hsu: Liquid Circuit》(2020-21) 由Sohrab Mohebbi策展，在紐約雕塑藝術中心舉行，梳理徐氏其自1982年至2002年間的創作生涯，及後展覽於洛杉磯漢默美術館再次舉行。近期參與展覽包括第 58 屆卡內基國際藝術展(2022)、第 59 屆威尼斯雙年展國際藝術展《夢想的牛奶》(2022) 及第 13 屆光州雙年展《意識燃起，精神振奮》(2021)。