

**Inhabiting
High-Density Realities:
On Shu Lea Cheang's
Artistic Language**

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Every artist who is an artist asks themselves the question of what an adequate artistic language for today might be. This is a vexing question and one that has multiple translations. Some of these translations can be set out as: What does it require to accurately perceive the world as it is? What is the force of being in the present that drives certain things to manifest? What needs attending to, with what kinds of alertness? And as such, what is the relation of art to other kinds of knowledge and perception? In turn, we may ask, what needs to be made, what compels itself to being, so that we can have some recognition of the present as it unfolds? And what is a language, such that it can be fully participated in—surely it is not only a series of rules for allocating the position of symbols?

This chain of questions is complex and multiple—and unending. Each of these ways of framing are in themselves unsatisfactory. They require reworking, testing, rephrasing, and parsing again through the question of how they translate. One of the classical modes by which artists assemble such questions is by working, openly and carefully, or wildly, to achieve a saturation of all possible means of attention and perception until something resolves. There is no sense of a limit to the condition of such work. It is also a deadly problem.

When we ask the question of what artistic language is adequate for the present, there is a double movement. Firstly, one asks what the contemporary condition is, and at the same time, elaborates on the conditions by which such a proposition can be made, as in the language by which it can be described, changed, become more intense, more sober, more joyfully or more curiously lived. What is it that is missed in the present which goes unmarked? What in turn would make sense or be a way of making sense?

This double movement spreads out in myriad directions—art is a river with two mouths. Some artists, perhaps wisely or with undue caution (depending on their significance) attempt to address (or evade) art by condensing the domain and the means of its search into a certain set of approaches that become all the more

tightly defined. Such tightening, it is hoped, becomes a process of clarification.

Mitigating slightly against this, but raising the stakes of the game, is what artists have a problem with, and the advantage that they are not simply and solely dealing with language per se but with the whole of culture. That is to say, with all of the ways of being, knowing, and doing. One such way in the present is the condition in which computational structures start to work their way into the veins of culture more broadly. Meanwhile, amidst this state of doubling, recursivity, and transformation, we can recognize the condition of heterogeneity as a fundamental aspect of the present. This is not an absolute and incoherent heterogeneity but one within which we have to find the as yet unuttered urgencies and exigencies. This is a heterogeneity in which everything is understood to be multidimensional, but by no means “relativist,” and which is open to the subtleties of inquiry. The work of the artist is to refine sensibility to this condition, and sometimes, contradictorily so, to intensify it to a point of quintessence. An effect of this latter movement is sometimes to render something palpable with the finesse of great simplicity, audacity, or even crudeness: for instance, articulating in a direct and uncompromised manner something palpable and essential about the movement of an idea through its possible permutations and the aesthetic and other conjunctions that give rise to its coming into being.

Here, there is a setting up of a dialogue between the complexity of gestation and the crudeness or rawness of expression. Such movements in a work bear comparison with some of the most ancient principles of the arts present, for instance, in ceramics, calligraphy, and cuisine. But they may also be traversing in their complex rawness through the highly systematized languages that have culturally accreted around technologies, sexualities, genders, etc. Such accretions may be composed of immense concatenations of traditions, assumptions, scientific and quasi-scientific figurations, techniques of perception and knowledge, as well as highly ramified,

vulgarized, dreamy or brutally direct conjunctions with other meaning-making systems, such as those of commerce and bodily sensation and its processing.

Artworks then become multidimensional complexes of interactions between highly variegated, often stratified, and profoundly internally differentiated systems for the articulation of meaning and force. As such, they show, by an understanding of the subtlety of gesture or inflection and by the precision of what is brought together, how substantial effects can come about. Every conjuncture in these complexes of interaction carries with it a penumbra of virtualities. These implicit capacities for other comings into being focus attention on the actual choice or movement that has or is being made. But they also ramify the texture of the contingency and systematicity of the coming into being of the work: the interactions from which it arises. In this state of movement, attention is paid in a particularly heightened way to the precision or the thusness of an event, a pattern of recording, the grain of a technology, or the pliosiveness or serenity of a certain conjunctural formation or aspect. There is a multiple movement of ramification and precision in these movements, both honing down the work and opening it up.

Within such a condition, artistic agency may be gained by entities, effects, and processes that are sometimes uncannily outside of human sensorial capacity. Artists have traditionally sought for ways of giving body and force to the unuttered, partially sensed, the whispered, the unspeakable. In doing so, they may make alliances with the forces of the universe that have other measures than control: a mastery of the art of being unmastered; a sensitivity to the detail and vast movements of the cosmos; and what writhes, creeps, and grinds within it, from the most ostensibly material to the most putatively abstract.

Shu Lea Cheang has made this condition a space in which to live. In this state of being, a mobile set of concerns including sex, futures, gender, ecology, money, media, and food combine in a highly differential manner, with a set of open working methods. These

encompass film, installation, online work, social processes, and direct intervention in the sociopolitical, technical and aesthetic systems, and the imaginaries which co-compose them. As well as having her own particular aesthetic concerns that are elaborated in a range of artistic languages, Cheang's methods also include creating contexts for the development of artistic languages to emerge. That is to say, she operates at the level of collective individuation in which art and the consideration of its adequacy to the present can be arrived at. Such work implies that there is also an aesthetic of collaboration to be found—an activity core to her work—for instance, in the creation of common platforms or in the curation of the work by other artists, technologists, and musicians with whom she works. Such platforms also establish a condition in which duration begins to operate as a dimension where a work unfolds and finds itself, and in which processing the question of the language of a project becomes part of the palpable working method. The latter is especially true of the projects that, as we will see below, operate through multiple stages. Alongside key concerns (the exploration of sex and ecology, the probing and development of digital media, and the broad swath of imaginaries that accompany it) which have been core to Cheang's work for over three decades. In this essay, I want to map out some of these tendencies, both of her aesthetic concerns and the complexes of languages and drives she brings together to work on them.

Brandon (1998–99) is one of the key projects of art on the Internet that stems from the explosion of activity in this field during the late 1990s.¹ The work is a memorial to Brandon Teena, a Nebraska trans man who was raped and murdered in 1993.² The project aims to tell something of his story and to establish a space for rebellion against the annihilating forces of social normality.

Brandon was designed as a platform for a year-long narrative, with versions occurring on a video wall in the Guggenheim's SoHo location and at De Waag Society for Old and New Media in Amsterdam;³ a later, 2000 spin-off from the project also appeared as

a street projection in the First International Transgender Film and Video Festival at the Lux Cinema in London. The project began as a complex website with five interfaces: “bigdoll,” “roadtrip,” “panopticon,” “mooplay,” and “theatrum anatomicum.” As a characteristic platform project, there are numerous contributors to the overall work orchestrated by Cheang, who draws on science fiction, cultural theory, the language of MOO (Multi-User Dungeon, Object-Oriented) and Internet Relay Chat, law, and transgender studies. There is also a sense of Cheang’s project being made out of and becoming an uncanny alliance. In part this was due to economic necessity: the development of temporary consortia to pull together a patchwork of budgets, timeframes, expertise, and facilities. But the collaborative impetus had its own aesthetic interest too. The polyphonic layering and exploration of both a conjoint and disjoint space of operations, pages and pop-up windows, involved a number of different ordering structures and an information design that shifts across pages—this was a time before the large-scale centralization and standardization of the World Wide Web, a time when there was an inevitably partial sense of free address to others, whether those others be persons or machines.

The website brought together different organizing schema within the five interfaces, along with historic and current personae, stories, court cases, avatars. Such a site was (back when dial-up access to the Internet was standard) considered to be extremely large, disconcerting, and indeed saturated in terms of the information it presented. An interest amongst other artists working on the Internet at that time was to create projects of multiple sites and pages which somehow hung together and produced a sense of an event, conspiracy, or cultural wave out of the interaction of numerous perspectives. Part of the surprise of the hyperlink was that it could create a connection between not only opposing positions but also the slyly tangential, which might take the user down some intriguing rabbit holes—many parallax views create a disjointed whole out of their potential intersections.

Brandon, indeed, works across multiple interfaces in order to show how an event comes into being as a polyphonic becoming; an aspect which was amplified by the live events held as part of the project over 1998 and 1999. These attempts to create and then saturate a discursive space with a chorus bear some interesting similarities to the online opinion-rigging techniques that we see today, yet their production involved no action by automated processes, rather each link and connection had to be hand coded.⁴ The recent reconstruction of this artwork by curators and computer scientists has been equally marked by a technical ethos of multiplicity: commenting and rewriting code is done in a meticulous way that also folds prior versions of the work into the new composition.⁵

This work at the end of the twentieth century laid the grounds for what would follow: an elaboration of the method of the platform; a systematic address of the technologies of sex; and a feminist, queer, science-fictional, and always humorous reworking of the conventions of pornography. These productions began with the 2000 feature film *I.K.U.*, premiering that year at the Sundance Film Festival. Using the conventions of cyberpunk-era science fiction and bearing not a little resemblance to cheaply made and schlocky entertainments such as *Power Rangers*, on the one hand, and psychedelic porn, on the other, the film is a B-movie heaven of hyperdramatic encounters, overextended cuts, combinatorial workings through scenes of explicit sex, and an extended meditation on the relations between bodies and data. Orgasm data is collected by the androids’ hard drives and made into chips for inserting into mobile phones for download. This data becomes a commodity that can be bought and reexperienced.

In this project, and in others that follow, there is a close interweaving of biology, technology, and politics. Sex is a sequence of wet abstractions where programmatic operations tangle with a deep tissue of structures, control, and sensation. Abstractions flow in the opposite direction too: gender formats become flesh, idealizations transmute into quasi-organs. It is a form of hungry inquiry whose

questions may menace or may dilate with a tangential and surprising joy that teeters on a scalpel's edge of submission to a corporation or a state.

Following on from *I.K.U.*, *UKI* is an ongoing series of projects that involve two strands: a platform for postporn performers, feminist, and queer subjects, enacting sex as a resistant cataclysm; and an "interruptive cinema" (currently in development), where the audience interferes with the narrative. In a recent iteration, *UKI Virus Rising* shown at the 2018 Gwangju Biennale, the project becomes an installation in a red-tinged room: a stream of immense red cells swarm and circulate as a projection on the floor, while on the wall a view from a camera moving over a generated landscape of overlaid circuit boards rises up to reveal a floating body being caressed and entangled by metallic forms—the precious laboratory object of the GENOM Corporation.⁶ A sparse number of generic figures roam the cityscape of the motherboard. These are variant avatars of Reiko, a redundant *iku* (Japanese slang term for "orgasm") coder becoming electronic waste. As Reiko tries to reboot themselves by scavenging components and code, their bodies undergo uncanny transformations, encysting new organs, arguing with their uncooperative prostheses while sorting components, and learning to disappear. This frantic scavenging has reciprocal effects in the experimental floating body: Reiko encodes an I.K.U. virus that begins to spread and infest the precious specimen.

This project is in dialogue with Cheang's most recent feature film *Fluidø* (2017), which works the motifs of postporn performance into a science-fiction story line that sees the HIV virus mutating into a pleasure-giving drug; the virus is prohibited, leading to a thriving black market, one worked by a panoply of characters that form her familiars. *Fluidø* confirms Cheang's status as the artist laureate of the orgasm. The orgasm in the film is abstracted and migrates from a bodily event into something that has technical and numeric dimensions. It traverses and is transformed by the conditions of representation on screen, through gendered and postgender imaginaries,

through the turbidity of bodies. Typical of her articulation of the transformation of something raw into something drastically sophisticated and back again, the orgasm becomes intercepted and reformatted by other structures that can be registered or translated at the level of codes. The interpretative regime of information that was inaugurated by mathematician Claude Shannon is crucial here, for it allows, at least conceptually, to see an integration of technologies and bodies within a single framework.⁷ While this schema has so far failed to cohere as a totalized whole under a singularly encoded axiom, the multiscalar landscapes of cells, codes, interpretations, and the rebellion that Cheang inhabits can be named the terrain of art, a strange transmogrifying loop within systems of recursion.

Also brought together in this state are city spaces and the particularities of geography, something Cheang works with in a number of projects. A queer geography of Madrid is layered together in *Wonders Wander*, commissioned for Madrid Pride 2017, for example. A complex terrain is assembled in the work by using the city as its starting point and a smartphone app as its crucible. It is a map commemorating resistance and memorializing victims of anti-trans and homophobic violence that marks the joyous yet fraught period of La Movida Madrileña, following the death of the dictator Franco. As well as drawing on the stories of inhabitants, Cheang's characteristic science-fictional multitudes come into life on the screen: the city is revealed as one of migrants, crips, queers, lovers, post-families, dreamers, and other abjurers of boundaries and inventors of work-arounds.

This sense of wandering in a space which is at once informational and uses the open Internet as a guiding principle for navigation is something that builds on a series of "Net Nomad" projects developed by the artist in the 1990s. Here, Cheang launches herself into the space of the nets, roaming the world and documenting her travels, finding routes and the means to travel via blagged and hustled connections, throwing life through the window onto the screen. *Buy One, Get One*, made for the NTT InterCommunication Center

in Tokyo in 1997, for example, involves a custom-made “bento” case for a laptop and other travel accoutrements such as a webcam and a modem.⁸ It becomes the means to both make and record a journey.⁹

Today’s autofictional industries of self-documentation could be said to have their roots in such experiments. Technology allows for the imaginal untethering of subjectivities. Today, when activities such as photographing the meals one eats or tracking the places one drifts through are all sufficiently formatted to each have their own allocated surveillance business, it is difficult to imagine back to a time when such a thing was indeterminate. The idea of the log adapted from programming practices (in which a record of changes to code are annotated) is a record of activity, jumbled and meandering, thick with the impasto of compression algorithms squeezing juicy pictures down thin copper wires. Like much of Cheang’s work of this era, a grid of jumpy animated gifs cycles brightly between shots linking food, sex, and technology, and at the same time, there is a probing of the world, questioning its components and reassembling them on the basis of the trajectory of a life, one vector in the myriad of networks.

The search for a structuring imaginary not only afflicts artists. On the Internet other formulations have been assembled as explanations of this data system, such as the North American settler idea of the homestead (small plots of land are parceled out piecemeal to later become aggregated into ranches).¹⁰ Throwing oneself through the chat window to become a nomad was a decisive retort to settler metaphors. Free software programmer Audrey Tang remarks during the press conference for the launch of Cheang’s *3x3x6* that new informational systems allow for the linking together of spaces in novel ways, and via action grammars that are sufficiently plastic to allow for new kinds of spatial and societal compositions.¹¹ Tang suggests that previously in our understanding of space we only had certain laws of physics to work with, now we can overlay multiple subsets of the universal machine imagined

by mathematician-turned-computer scientist Alan Turing to form a superset of all possible symbolically describable functions. This second layering supplements physical systems with those of code and, thus, great generality and possibilities of plasticity. Like the spaces opened up in the city of *Wonders Wander*, society can be reinvented by the addition of enough supplementary topologies, enough protocols and spaces of learning and experiment, that the center of gravity shifts. And the version of a society guided by austerity, war, closed borders, and a permanent state of terror might just become something of a minor interest.

The vista opens up for the possibility of a topological ethics of pluriversity, where each dimension of a problem, condition, entity, or process is understood to be inherently multidimensional, as well as being worked on in the figuration of such an ethics. The work comes into composition within conflict, but also through imagination, yearning, education, and self-management. Cheang’s first feature film *Fresh Kill*, which premiered at the Berlinale in 1994 and was shown at the Whitney Biennale the following year, sets out something of a version of this work. As a mountainous volume of ever-increasing consumer and e-waste threatens to swallow Staten Island in New York City, a quirky cast of misfits and miscreants scramble to thrive amidst the mayhem. The artwork has affinities with the quick and dirty early films of John Waters and the activist video collective Paper Tiger Television, of which Cheang was an active member.¹² Just as the inhabitants of the world conjured up by *Fresh Kill* struggle to thrive in adversarial ecological conditions, the making of the film works against the constraints of time, resources, and equipment to bring itself into being. This question of ecology emerges with full force in Cheang’s later work: an ecological concern with the conditions of media that leads to a strand of projects, which firstly take on the question of common digital resources, then that of money and alternative currencies.¹³

A key work of the first concern is *Kingdom of Piracy*, a collaboration with Armin Medosch and Yukiko Shikata, brought online in

2002. This platform was set up as a four-year-long series of explorations of the condition of piracy, the sharing of digital files regardless of their relation to structures of ownership, and the wider question of the possibility for an economy of plenitude in the era of the digital copy. *Kingdom of Piracy* sought to explore the ways in which traditions of copying and free reproduction drawn from non-Western sources might provide new conditions of access. The project grew to involve numerous artists. It also met a certain amount of controversy when the initial commissioning entity conformed to political pressure—the question of piracy disappeared in a fog.

Piracy continues to be a necessity for access to culture, technology, science, and knowledge in the present day. Indeed, one can readily see how it has been foundational to the formation of apparently legitimate structures, such as YouTube, as well as less resourced platforms, such as Sci-Hub. It is the systematic attempt to tease out what is specific about a borderless approach to the properties of the intellect that marks the significance of this project and the materials it assembles. As such, the *Kingdom of Piracy* is nonuniform. In the intentional ventures into collaborative authorship, it is made up of the overlap of boundaries and side-effects, of surpluses and spills. The work is also a reflection of the unintentional consequence of the predominance of the digital, in which free circulation is more efficient in many ways (but not all) than those associated with property and privation.

Sensing some of the ways in which economic structures in themselves have a complex array of aesthetic dimensions is to render them “open” at certain scales of description. These include: the inscribing and recording of valuation and revaluation, abstraction and compression, and action at a distance; the reorganization of relations between persons and things; the condensation of experiences and lives into lines and matrices of symbols that in turn engender further wagers on the capacities of abstraction; different kinds of transfer and movement; a dance of hands and tokens and minds and needs and desires; a shifting kaleidoscope of symmetries

and asymmetries of information and power; a capacity for violence and generosity incipient in all arrangements of inclusion and exclusion; and, at least, a capacity for unfinishedness and provisionality.¹⁴ Money, such tokens, is also “filthy”; it can be “dirty,” or conversely “laundered” as such; it also contains a subsoil relation to ecological dimensions. Some of these aspects are traced by Cheang and her collaborators, including Ricardo Dominguez and Tovey Halleck, in a series of works that link ecological concerns to new imaginaries of technology. In a valuable essay on Cheang’s work, Medosch notes how many of her projects in the twenty-first century operate as a kind of real-time science fiction.¹⁵ In this collaborative project, a scenario for social change is set up and performed, enrolling members of the public, the rumor networks of the city, and the imagination of those who happen to catch a glimpse of a possible world coming into being.

In *Garlic=Rich Air* (2002–03), an open truck containing 10,000 or so bulbs of garlic tours New York City, offering to exchange one bulb for wireless Internet access. At this time wireless had not yet stabilized as a technology—though many artists and activists were proposing open forms of technology that privilege community access.¹⁶ *Garlic=Rich Air* and a later project *Agliomania* (2008–10) coupled this situation with the idea of a postcrash economy in which garlic might become gold standard. Whether this work anticipated the 2008 crash or brought the then contemporary Argentine crisis to the streets of New York is open to question, but it did create the space for a fabulation of an alternate economy based on tasty plants and an air of wild signals. The airwaves were figured as a commons and trade was rejigged as a form of a general, if slightly disconcerting, gift from all to all. Such projects set up a means for a city to check itself. People stop and ask what is happening. Once they find out, they then have to ask, well, if this is happening, what else must be going on? At this point, the flickering between artwork and the restaging of reality starts to work. People do a double take, not at the work but at what they thought they could take for granted.

Meanwhile, back in the future, another version of the project, *Rich Air 2030*, of the same year 2002–03, sees stock markets based on garlic rise and fall in a parallel fictional capital.¹⁷ The future was, in other words, ambivalent. The trading forms might be the first creepers of an ecological utopia finding their way into the present, but they might also be the early glimmerings of a new mode of corporate life-form made up of organs of code, garlic sap, high-bandwidth belief systems, and new regimes of stimulus-response. The future they stage, a coming into being in the crises of the present, is one that is already being pulled in multiple directions. To act in such a future is to act in the present.

Less fantastical or, as one might say, working by the fiction of being more practical is a series of projects that set up systems for composting in certain city districts. For instance, *Composting the City* (2012), is a distributed system of bins to aggregate compost from restaurants and households. Food waste was monitored by technological systems measuring moisture and other levels that could be viewed online. Key participants were worms, technologists, and the people who process and eat food. The gathering and moving of waste become a visible part of the dance of the city. Here, the palpable coming into being of a future is aligned with the formation of a technology that has yet to become stable, and thus requires the hackery involvement of the imagination. This moment of invention before a system is taken for granted, and how it slots into the background of everyday life is important to sustain. Maintaining the question of how ecologies work in relation to a city's parallel "unnatural" ecologies is to ask how the collective is able to compose new languages that redescribe the inevitability of entropy. At the same time, a parallel project *Composting the Net* (2012) animates the archives of mailing lists for the discussion of net culture.¹⁸ Whereas the debate on such things has often been about the question of preservation and storage, Cheang presents us with the archive as a series of written lines flowing over each other and breaking down into clusters of individual characters, which then accumulate as soil at

the bottom of the computer screen—from out of this textual humus, new sprouts grow as animated plants.

It might be construed that the latter is liable to being read as unusually illustrative, but this ecological dimension is coupled with the development of another platform and a further shift of agency. In association with Franz Xaver and Taro of Stadtwerkstadt artists' space in Linz, along with long-term collaborator Martin Howse and others, Cheang recently initiated a network of artists working with fungi: Mycelium Network Society (launched at Transmediale in 2017). The question of combining the networking capacities of fungal mycelium, including the substance's ability to communicate via chemical transmission, is speculatively joined with radio networks.¹⁹ Adding a medial dimension to a long-established species, with advanced networks of its own, is to provide a new language for thinking the cybernetic organism as fungus. A question the work raises is how does the mycelium, given all the other dimensions it lives amidst, begin to interact with the interferences and consistencies of the electromagnetic dimension to which it has been introduced? One might say that this returns us to the question that this essay began with, but at a different scale: How might we form a life in the context of a present where the media is part of its ecology?

This question of how to make a life is a persistent one for Cheang, who has staked her being on the capacity of networks to make connections. It is also something that arises in the last of the series of works that I want to touch on here. The *Locker Baby* project (2001–12) has three parts: *Baby Play* (2001, exhibited at NTT [ICC], Tokyo), *Baby Love* (2005, commissioned for Palais de Tokyo, Paris), and *Baby Work* (ZERO1 Biennial 2012, San Jose). The baby concerned is a generic, pink, almost plastic-looking template for a baby. It is a baby that is cute in a certain minimally featured way, but it is also slightly menacing in its lack of individuating features.

This figure of the baby becomes a table football player in the first installation, with a transparent adult-sized body. In the second

work *Baby Love*, a team of six babies sit in giant teacups that move and circulate like fairground bumper cars while playing MP3 files of love songs, which can be added to by online participants—the babies share a wireless local area network. Adventurous members of the audience may elect to sit inside one of the teacups along with a baby and steer the vehicle. In *Baby Work*, the figure of the baby is transposed onto the audience. Their task is to enter a room of e-trash, the discarded keys from broken keyboards, and assemble them onto a panel that generates sounds according to the arrangement of keys. The baby figure is also an animation that bashes at the keyboards, continually breaking the keys. This baby stands in for the id, the untrammled desire that finds its format on the Internet. But the baby is also to be found in the patient work of reassembling e-waste into new compositions. In a sense then, we can say that this combination condenses many of Cheang's concerns. As we make our lives in these landscapes of e-waste and dreams, while finding languages with which to express and to consummate desire, the precise sorting of the trash remains immediately necessary.

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1. For documentation of aspects of this activity, see Marco Deseriis and Giuseppe Maano, *Net. Art: L'arte della commessione* (Milan: Shake Edizioni, 2003); Tilman Baumgärtel, *net.art: Materialien zur Netzkunst* (Nuremberg: Verlag für modern Kunst, 1999) and *net.art 2.0: Neue Materialien zur Netzkunst* (Nuremberg: Verlag für modern Kunst, 2001); Rachel Greene, *Internet Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004); and Josephine Bosma, *Nettitudes: Let's Talk Net Art* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers; Amsterdam: Institute for Network Cultures, 2011).
 2. Rhizome's "Net Art Anthology" includes the restored version of Shu Lea Cheang's *Brandon* (1998–99), <https://anthology.rhizome.org/brandon>.
 3. The organization is now renamed Waag, Technology and Society.
 4. See, for instance, the description "immersive influence ecosystem" in the report by the cybersecurity and brand management company New Knowledge, "The Tactics and Tropes of the Internet Research Agency," 2018. Analysis of related campaigns under the auspices of other countries outside of the US have yet to be made public.

5. This is a remarkable project in its own right as it uses a number of techniques to restage the original interactive artwork by applying emulations of the software in use at the time of its initial creation; the project crucially makes these techniques accessible online. See Deena Engel, Laurel Hinkson, Joanna Phillips, and Marion Thane, "Reconstructing Brandon (1998–99): A Cross-disciplinary Digital Humanities Study of Shu Lea Cheang's Early Web Artwork," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (2018).
6. See footage of the three-channel installation *UKI Virus Rising* (2018), Gwangju Biennale on Shu Lea Cheang's YouTube video channel, accessed January 8, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEo5hAVK6G4>.
7. Claude E. Shannon, "A Mathematical Theory of Communication," *Bell System Technical Journal* 27 (July / October 1948): 379–423 and 623–56.
8. This theme arises again in the computers designed for the wireless access project *Take2030* (2005), with Alexei Blinov and Ilze Black.
9. The project is nominally archived online, see the NTT InterCommunication Center website, <http://www.ntticc.or.jp/en/archive/works/buy-one-get-one>.
10. See Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).
11. Launch event for ㄨxㄨ6, "Democracy in Transition: Freedom, Art, and Cooperative Action in the Fourth Industrial Revolution," discussion between Audrey Tang, Paul B. Preciado, and Shu Lea Cheang, November 27, 2018, accessed January 8, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtMXEzF02Ow&feature=youtu.be>.
12. Paper Tiger Television online, accessed January 8, 2019, <http://www.papertiger.org>.
13. Shu Lea Cheang has been active in generating public debate and information on this issue. See, for instance, the *MCD* magazine for digital culture that she edited, *MCD#76: We Grow Money, We Eat Money, We Shit Money* (2015).
14. For a further elaboration of such themes, see Marina Vishmidt, *Speculation as a Mode of Production* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).
15. Armin Medosch, "Greening the Network Commons," *The Next Layer*, June 10, 2013, accessed January 8, 2019, <http://www.thenextlayer.org/comment/358.html>.
16. At certain points these groups were both technologically and ideationally ahead of the larger corporate players, who later attempted to standardize and bulldoze the airwaves. See, for instance, the work of the groups Consume and spc.org in London, both of which Shu Lea Cheang was in active communication with.
17. See the *Garlic=RichAir 2030* website, <http://garlic03.worldofprojects.info>. Rhizome in New York restaged the work as part of their "Net Art Anthology" series in January–May 2019.
18. Shu Lea Cheang, interview by Annet Dekker, *AAAAAN.net*, part of "NetArt Works: Online Archives," May 12, 2012, accessed January 8, 2019, <http://aaaaan.net/shu-lea-cheang-composting-the-net>.
19. See Peter McCoy, *Radical Mycology: A Treatise on Seeing and Working with Mushrooms* (Portland, OR: Chthaeus Press, 2016).

棲息於高密度現實
鄭淑麗的藝術語言

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每位真正的藝術家都會自問：什麼藝術語言最適合今天？這個問題令人困擾，且有多種解讀。其中一些解讀可以這樣表達：如何才能準確地感知世界本身？「身處當下」（being in the present）究竟具有什麼力量，能驅使某些東西彰顯出來？什麼東西需要關切、而表達這種關切需要具備怎樣的警覺性？同時，藝術與其他種類的知識和感知之間，究竟有什麼關係？相應地，我們可以追問，什麼東西需要先被創造出來、什麼東西需要讓自己先形成，才能讓我們透過這種東西，在「當下」展開的時候，看見這個「當下」？此外，什麼語言能讓人完全參與到這個語言中去？顯然，這種語言並不只是一套用來規定符號如何排列的規則。

這一連串問題複雜、多樣，且無限延伸。無論用哪種框架來表述這些問題，都不令人滿意。我們需要考量如何解讀它們，從而修正、測試、重新表達這些問題。藝術家集中呈現這些問題的經典方式之一，就是創作：開放式的、仔細的，或是狂野的創作，嘗試所有方法去專注、去感知，直到事情解決。這樣的創作在條件上不設限。同時，這也是個極大的難題。

什麼藝術語言最適合「當下」？這個問題涉及到一種雙重動作。首先，我們是在詢問何為當代情勢；與此同時，我們在這樣問的時候，也是在詳細說明，什麼樣的情勢才能讓這種語言更好地描述、改變「當下」，使之更強烈、更清醒，或是可以更愉悅地或更好奇地被體驗。在這個沒有被彰顯的「當下」中，什麼被錯過了？相應地，什麼東西會具有意義？什麼方式會產生意義？

這個雙重動作向無數方向延伸——藝術這條河有兩個河口。一些藝術家，要麼出於智慧，要麼是因為過分謹慎（這取決於他們的地位），在試圖處理（或迴避）藝術這個問題的時候，常常把探詢的範圍及方式壓縮成一套特定方法，而這些方法還會變得日漸侷限。但他們希望這種侷限會讓問題變得簡明。

換一種較為溫和，但同時又給問題加碼的方式來看，可以說藝術家們面對的困難——或者說優勢——在於，他們要處理的不僅僅是語言本身，而是整個文化。也就是說，他們要處理存在、認知和行事的的所有方

式。在當下，他們要處理的方式之一，就是計算結構是在怎樣的情勢下開始在更大範圍內逐步深入文化脈絡的。同時，在這種重疊、重複和變化的狀態中，我們可以看到，異質性已經成為「當下」的一個基本面向。這種異質性既不絕對，也不雜亂，但在這種異質性中，我們必須找到尚未表達出的急迫與危急。在這種異質性之內，每樣事物都被認為具有多維度，但又不是「相對論」意義上的多維度，而是指要對一切細膩的探詢都保持開放。藝術家的工作就是提高對這一情況的敏感度，而且頗為矛盾的是，有時候還要加強這一情況，使之成為典範。這後一種動作的效應，就是有時需要以極其簡潔、大膽，乃至原始的手段來栩栩如生地表現某些東西：例如，以一種直接的、不妥協的方式，把一個理念發展軌跡的某種明顯精髓表達出來，追蹤它的種種組合可能性，以及催生它的美學及其他前提條件。

在這裡，在醞釀的複雜性與表達的粗獷或原始之間，建立了對話。作品中的這類脈動與某些藝術形式（例如，陶瓷、書法，及烹調）所遵從的最古老原則之間，具有可比擬性；但同時，這些複雜且原始的脈動，也會與高度系統化的語言交叉，而這些語言是與技術、性、性別等文化維度共生在一起的。這些共生體系本身可能承載了傳統、假設、科學及準科學表述、感知技能，以及知識技能等等眾多相關事物，並與其他意義產生體系（例如，商業體系以及身體的感官、處理體系）之間有著枝節叢生的、庸俗化的、夢寐般的，或是粗暴直接的聯結。

藝術作品於是成了多維度的複雜體，承載了意義表達及力量表達體系之間的互動，而這些體系高度駁雜，往往已層級化，且在內部具有深刻的分化。這樣的藝術作品顯現出，藝術家如何透過對姿態或變化的微妙理解、透過精確表達作品內容，來取得強烈效果。在這些複雜體的互動中，每個連接點都帶有虛擬因子的陰影。這些隱含的力量可以催生其他事物，但在具體作品中卻聚焦於藝術家已做出或正在做出的實際選擇，或是聚焦於已出現或正在出現的動向。但同時，這些隱含力量讓作品在成形過程中伴隨的偶然性和系統性具有多重可能：作品就是在這樣的互動中誕生的。在這個運動狀態中，藝術家常常全力聚焦於某個事

件、某種記錄模式、某項技術的細節，或是一個特定的連結構造或維度的爆發或靜寂，考察它們是否精確，是否具有真實本質（thusness）。這些動態過程中蘊含了衍生性及精確性的多重動向，一方面讓作品簡化，一方面又讓其開放。

在這樣的情況下，藝術能動性（artistic agency）可以出現在種種實體、效應及過程中——詭異的是，這些實體、效應和過程有時來自人類感官能力之外。傳統上，藝術家們探尋種種方式，讓未被表達的、模模糊糊感受到的、被呢喃低語抒發的，以及難以言說的一切獲得實體、獲得力量。在這樣做的時候，他們可能要與宇宙中不受控制的力量結成同盟：他們要掌握「不受掌握」這門技藝，要對宇宙的細節和宏大運動都具有敏感度，要能識別宇宙中有什麼在痛苦扭曲、蠕動、翻攪，不論是看似最具有物質性的東西，還是假想存在的最抽象的事物。

鄭淑麗把這種狀況變成了生活的空間。在這種存在狀態下，一整套動態的關注點，包括性、多重未來、性別、生態、金錢、媒體，以及食物，被以高度差別化的方式與一套開放式的創作手法合在一起。這些手法包括電影、裝置、網路作品、各種社會過程，以及對社會政治、技術、美學體系及參與了共同創作的各種想像的直接干預。鄭淑麗有自己的特殊美學關注，並用不同的藝術語言來細緻表達這些關注；同時，她的方法還包括創造語境，並在這些語境中催生、發展各種藝術語言。也就是說，她在集體性層面上進行創作，她對藝術的考量、對藝術是否符合「當下」的考量，都是在這個層面上進行的。這樣的創作暗含了一種合作美學，而合作正是鄭淑麗作品的核心：例如，她參與了共同平臺的創建，或是為與她合作的其他藝術家、技術專家及音樂家策展。這樣的平臺使得持續性（duration）成了作品的一個維度，讓作品在此期間得以展開，並自我發現；同時，在這種情勢下，對作品語言問題的處理，成了創作方法的顯著部分。正如我們接下來會看到的，後者在許多創作階段中，尤為如此。過去三十多年來，除了性剝削和生態等主要問題外，鄭淑麗作品的核心還包括對數位媒體（及其伴隨而來的廣闊想像）的探究及發展。在本文中，筆者希望描繪出其中一些創作方向，包括鄭淑麗的美

學關注，以及被她揉合在一起探索的語言及驅力（drives）的複雜問題。

九〇年代末，網路藝術領域突然爆發出蓬勃活力，而《布蘭登》（*Brandon*）（1998–1999）正是當時出現的主要網路藝術作品之一。¹這個作品紀念的是布蘭登·提納（Brandon Teena），一位於1993年被強暴、謀殺的美國內布拉斯加跨性別男士。²這個作品的目的是講述他的故事，並建立一個空間，來反抗社會常態（social normality）的毀滅性力量。

《布蘭登》被設計成一個為期一年的敘事平臺；在紐約古根漢的蘇活分館，以及在阿姆斯特丹測量所的新舊媒體協會³展出時，影音牆上播放著這個敘事的不同版本。後來，2000年的時候，還誕生了一個衍生作品，作為街頭投影，在倫敦拉科斯影院（Lux Cinema）舉辦的第一屆國際跨性別電影及錄像節上亮相。這個作品一開始的時候是一個有五個界面的複雜網站，這些界面分別為：「大玩偶」（bigdoll）、「公路旅行」（roadtrip）、「全景監獄」（panopticon）、「角色置換」（mooplay），以及「解剖劇院」（theatrum anatomicum）。作為典型的系統平臺計劃，這個專案有無數參與者，而作品總體由鄭淑麗綜合協調。鄭借助於科幻、文化理論、MOO 語言（MOO為Multi-User Dungeon，Object-Oriented之縮寫）及網際網路中繼聊天（Internet Relay Chat）語言、法律，以及跨性別研究。同時，可以說，鄭淑麗的作品源於一個奇異聯盟，自身也成了一個奇異聯盟。這某部分是出於經濟需要，因為暫時的聯盟合作需要把資金、檔期、專才和場地湊在一起。但這種合作動力也具有自己的美學意趣。這個作品的運作空間既相連又分開，既有頁面，又有彈出式視窗，對這個空間的複調式重疊和探索，牽涉到幾種不同排序結構和跨頁訊息設計——此時，全球資訊網尚未發生大規模的中心化和標準化，而藝術家尚有較大自由（儘管，不可避免地，這只是部分意義上的自由）來對他者進行交流，不論他者是人還是機器。

網站彙集了五個界面中不同的組織模式，同時還加入了歷史及當代人物、故事、法庭案例與化身等元素。這樣的網站在當時（那時候撥接還是標準的上網方式）被認為十分龐大、令人不安，而且的確也出現了

訊息飽和的情況。當時網路創作的一些藝術家的一個共同興趣是，創建有多個網站和頁面的作品，讓這些網站或頁面在某種意義上成為一體，並透過多視角的互動，製造某個事件或密謀或文化浪潮正在發生的氛圍。超連結帶來的驚喜部分在於，它不僅能把相反的意見連結起來，而且也能把不動聲色的外圍意見連進來，而後者本來是用戶要仔細搜尋才找得到的——眾多有視差的角度可以從潛在的交叉點中創造出一個支離破碎的整體。

的確，透過多重界面運作，《布蘭登》試圖展現一個事件是如何經由複調式變化出現的；這一方面在這個作品（它具有從1998年到1999年的跨度）組成部分的現場事件中，被放大了。這些手法創造了一個充滿了複調話語的空間，與今天網上的言論操控手法有著有趣的相似點，但這些言論的製造沒有任何自動過程的干預；相反，每個鏈接和連結都必須是人工編碼的。⁴最近，策展人和電腦專家重建了這個藝術作品，而這次重建在技術上依然強調這種多重性（multiplicity）：專家們細心處理評論、重寫代碼，把早前版本融合到了新的創作裡。⁵

這個二十世紀末的創作為接下來的作品開拓了疆土。這些作品有以下特點：對系統平臺方法的詳述、對性技術的系統關照、用女性主義、酷兒、科幻以及永遠幽默的方式對情色俗套重新發揮。這些創作始於2000年的劇情長片電影《I.K.U.》，此片同年在日舞影展首映。這部電影使用了電腦科幻的俗套，一方面酷似《金剛戰士》（*Power Rangers*）之類低劣的廉價娛樂產品，一方面又很像迷幻情色電影。可以說，這部片子集B級片之大成，有極度誇張的劇情、過長的剪輯、人物之間赤裸裸性行為的各種組合，並對身體與數據之間的關係進行長時間思考。有關高潮的數據是由安卓系統的硬碟收集的，並被製成晶片，可以插入手機下載。這種數據成了商品，可以買來重新體驗。

在這個作品，以及隨後的作品中，生物、技術和政治緊密交織。性成了一系列潮濕的抽象，在這些抽象中，程式操作與厚厚的、組織似的結構、控制及感官纏繞在一起。抽象也會朝著相反的方向走，讓性別模式變成肉體，讓理念轉化變形為類器官。這是種飢渴的探詢方式，它提

出的問題可能虎視眈眈，也可能帶有間接的、始料不及的小愉悅，以及對大企業或國家的那種如同站在手術刀口上的戰戰兢兢。

《I.K.U.》的後續《UKI》由一系列進行中的作品組成，這些作品有兩個發展方向：其中一個是系統平臺，讓後情色（post-porn）表演者、女權分子，以及酷兒主體把性當作一種抵抗式的催化劑來呈現；另一個則是一部尚在創作中的「中斷式電影」作品，它會讓觀眾參與、改變敘事。2018年光州雙年展上，這個作品以《UKI病毒叛亂》（*UKI Virus Rising*）為題重新呈現，變身為一個裝置作品：一個紅色房間內，流動的巨大紅細胞被投射到地板上，循環蠕動同時，牆上投射出用移動拍攝手法拍攝的眾多電路板構成的風景，鏡頭向上搖，聚焦於一具漂浮的身體，這個身體被金屬之物觸摸、纏繞——這正是染色體公司（Genom Corporation）的珍貴實驗對象。⁶零零落落有幾個毫無個體特色的人體，在主機板上的城市風景中漫遊。這些都是玲子（Reiko）的不同化身：玲子從多餘的「iku」（iku在日本俚語裡意為「高潮」）程式編碼員變成了電子廢物。當玲子們想要清理元件和編碼並重啟自身時，這些身體發生了奇異的變化，它們包裹了新的器官，與不合作的假體爭執，同時整理元件，並學會消失。這瘋狂的清理在漂浮的實驗身體中具有交互作用：玲子編碼出一種I.K.U.病毒，該病毒隨之擴散開來，感染了珍貴的樣品。

這部作品與鄭淑麗的最新電影《體液o》（*Fluidō*）（2017）形成對話。這部電影把後情色表演的各種主題放到一個科幻故事中來，並在故事中把愛滋病毒變成了讓人產生愉悅的毒品。這種病毒的被禁，滋生了一個生意興隆的黑市，而往來其中的，都是鄭淑麗作品中的常見人物。《體液o》證實，鄭淑麗就是表現高潮的最佳藝術家。在這部電影中，高潮不再是一個身體事件，而被抽象、被抽離，變成了具有技術維度和數字維度的東西。在這個過程中，它透過性別化的，以及後性別（postgender）的想像，透過身體的濁化，跨越了銀幕表現的前提條件，並被這些條件改變。鄭淑麗經常表現原始的東西如何變成成熟世故之物，而這成熟世故之物又如何回歸到其原始狀態。同樣，電影中高潮被

其他結構截獲、重組，成為可以用代碼來記錄或翻譯的東西。克勞德·夏農（Claude Shannon）提出的訊息闡釋法認為，至少在概念上，技術和身體是可以整合到單一框架下的。⁷ 鄭淑麗用細胞、編碼、詮釋和反抗譜寫的棲息之所是多個標量體。儘管這個多標量體迄今未能作為一個和諧地自成一體、符合一個獨特編碼原理的東西存在，但它依舊可以被命名為一個藝術領地，一個處於遞迴體系內的、奇怪的變形循環。

在這一狀況下，城市空間和具體的地理特點也被結合起來——鄭淑麗在若干作品中對此都有表現。例如，鄭淑麗為2017年馬德里同志大遊行創作的《簇新酷兒漫遊記》（*Wonders Wander*）中，展現了馬德里的酷兒地理。城市成了起點，而一個智慧型手機APP成了它的熔爐，集結出一個複雜的地形。這個地圖紀念抵抗，為反跨性別（anti-trans）及恐同暴力的受害者發聲——這些暴力出現在獨裁者佛朗哥死後，馬德里迎來的歡樂卻又不安的過渡期。以居民的故事為靈感來源，鄭淑麗特有的科幻多重體作品在銀幕上誕生：作品展現出，這個城市充滿了移民、身障者、酷兒、情人、後家庭成員（post-families）、夢想家、其他被擯棄在界外的人，以及發明從事各種零碎工作的人。

鄭淑麗於1990年代創作的一系列「網路遊牧」（*Net Nomad*）作品就已經處理過這種在一個空間（這個空間也是訊息空間）裡遊蕩、利用開放網路作為導航的議題。在這些作品中，鄭淑麗投身於網路構成的空間，遨遊世界並記錄自己的旅行，在哄騙與兜攬連結之間，找到旅行的路徑和方式，把生命透過視窗投射到螢幕上去。例如，在她1997年為東京日本電信電話株式會社（NTT）ICC（Inter Communications Centre）製作的作品《買一送一》（*Buy One, Get One*）中，出現了一個客製化「便當盒」，裡面裝有一部筆記型電腦和其他旅行裝備（例如網路攝影機和數據機）。⁸ 這個「便當盒」一方面讓旅行成為可能，一方面可以用來記錄旅行。⁹

可以說，今日記錄自我的虛構自傳類產業，就根源於這樣的實驗性作品。技術讓主體性在想像中得到解放。今天，拍攝吃了什麼、閒逛去了哪裡之類的行為，都帶有相當程度的監控意味；在這樣的年代，很難回想到這種事情曾經是不明確的。記錄（log）這個概念源自程式設計過

程中對代碼變化的記錄；而現在這個概念的意思是活動記錄。這種記錄雜亂鬆散，充滿了壓縮算式——這些算式能讓刺激感官的圖片透過細細銅線傳遞。就像鄭淑麗這一時期的其他很多作品那樣，這裡也用了許多生動的GIF格式動畫圖片，它們活躍循環，把食物、性和技術的鏡頭串聯起來，同時，作品也審視世界，探究世界的組成成分，並以生命軌跡作為萬千網絡中的一個向量，以其為基礎，重新組合這些成分。

對架構性想像的追求，並不限於藝術家。同時期，在網際網路上，其他一些類似構想，譬如說，北美特有的源自開拓時代的公地（homestead）概念（即把小塊地零碎分開，之後集合起來成為牧場）也被用來解釋這種數據系統。¹⁰ 一個人透過聊天視窗，從而變成游牧者——這是對移民開拓者比喻的有力反駁。在《3x3x6》的記者發布會上，自由軟體程式設計師唐鳳（Audrey Tang）指出，新的資訊系統可以用新的方式把空間連起來，例如，可以透過語法（action grammars），因為這些文法夠有彈性，可以容納新型的空間構成和社會構成。¹¹ 唐鳳認為，從前我們只能依靠一套有限的物理原理來理解空間，而現在，由於有了圖靈（Alan Turing）發明的計算模型（即一個把可以在象徵層面上描述的一切功能合在一起的超集），我們現在可以把圖靈機模式下的子集疊合起來。這個層級上的編碼系統是對物理系統的補充，且具有更大的一般性和彈性。就像是《簇新酷兒漫遊記》的城市中激發出來的各種空間一樣，如果增加了足夠的補充性拓樸構造，增加了足夠的學習及實驗的規則和空間，社會就會更新，引力中心就會移動。本來受制於艱苦條件、戰爭、關閉的邊界和永久恐懼的社會，也會多一點趣味。

這個願景開啟了一套有關多重性（pluriversity）的拓樸倫理（topological ethics），在這種多重性下，每個問題、條件、實體或過程的各個方面，都被理解為是多維度的，都是在這樣的倫理中得到處理的。作品在衝突中——同時也透過幻想、嚮往、教育和自我管理——被創造出來。鄭淑麗的第一部劇情長片《活色生殺》（*Fresh Kill*）中，就體現了這種創作方式。該片於1994年在柏林影展首映，第二年又在惠特尼

雙年展上映。片中，不斷增加的消費廢物和電子廢物排山倒海，將要吞噬紐約市的史泰登島，而一幫「怪咖、宵小」在混亂中卻混得風生水起。這部作品與約翰·華特斯（John Waters）早年那些快節奏的、捕捉駭機鏡頭的電影很有共性，同時也很像激進集體影像頻道《紙老虎電視》的作品，而鄭淑麗本身正是這個頻道的積極參與者。¹²在《活色生殺》中，居民們在惡劣的生態環境中努力生活。類似地，製作這部電影本身就是與時間、資源和設備匱乏的對抗中完成的。生態問題在鄭淑麗之後的作品中將會重磅出擊：對媒體景況產生的生態關切，催生了一系列作品，探討共有數位資源的問題，以及金錢和替代貨幣的問題。¹³

體現第一類關切點的一個重要作品是《派樂西王國》（*Kingdom of Piracy*），該作品與阿爾敏·麥多士（Armin Medosch）及四方幸子（Yukiko Shikata）合作完成，於2002年上線。這個系統平臺用四年時間探索盜版如何產生，人們如何無視版權而共享數位資源，以及一個更大的問題：在數位複製年代，富足經濟是否還有可能。《派樂西王國》探索的是，復刻、免費複製的非西方傳統，可提供什麼新的方式，讓我們獲得查閱、使用權。這項創作日漸擴大，吸引到很多藝術家參與。當起初的作品委託機構屈於政治壓力，讓盜版問題淡出作品的時候，也造成了一定程度的爭議。

一直到今天，盜版都是獲取文化、技術、科學和知識資源的必要手段。實際上，不難看到，盜版對於貌似合法成立的平臺，例如YouTube，以及資源相對不是那麼充沛的平臺，譬如Sci-Hub，都起到立基作用。這部作品以系統的方式，努力發現人們對智慧產權採取的無國界手段，究竟有什麼具體特點——這正是這部作品以及它彙集的素材意義所在。可以說，《派樂西王國》具有不一致性。它有意追求合作，但在這個過程中，出現了越界、出現了各種副作用、出現了盈餘和溢出。這個作品也對數位為王所造成的不經意後果進行了反思：自由流通在許多方面（但並非所有方面）比與產權及匱乏有關的流通更有效率。

經濟結構自身具有一套複雜的美學維度——要對這一點有所認識，就需要用一定規模的描述將其「開放式」地呈現出來。這些描述包括：對估價與重新估價、抽象和壓縮、遠距離行動的書寫和記錄；對人與物之間

關係的重新組織；把經驗和生活濃縮成線條及符號矩陣，而這些線條及符號矩陣又會刺激抽象能力；不同類型的轉移和運動；讓手、象徵記號、頭腦、需要和欲望一起共舞；資訊及權力之間對稱、不對稱關係的瞬息萬變；在一切包含和排除中都蘊含的暴力及慷慨；而且至少要有能力具有不完成性（unfinishedness）和暫時性。¹⁴作為此類象徵的金錢，也是「汙穢」的：它可以是「髒的」，或反過來說，它可以「被洗」，因此，它與生態維度之間也有一種「底土」（subsoil）關係。在一系列將生態關懷和技術新想像相結合的作品中，鄭淑麗和她的合作者們——包括里卡多·多明蓋茨（Ricardo Dominguez）和托威·海樂克（Tovey Halleck）——對這些問題也做了追溯。在一篇討論鄭淑麗作品的重要文章中，阿爾敏·麥多士告訴我們鄭淑麗二十一世紀的作品中有多少部都是在真實時間中運作的科幻。¹⁵前述作品建立、扮演了一個社會變化場景，這個場景聚集了大眾、城市流言網絡，以及某些人的想像力——這些人湊巧看到了一個另類世界的誕生。

2002至2003年的作品《大蒜元》（*Garlic=Rich Air*）在一臺開放的卡車中裝了一萬顆蒜頭，卡車在紐約市巡遊，用蒜頭換取無線上網。當時無線技術發展尚不穩定，但許多藝術家和活動分子已在積極尋找對廣大社群開放的技術形式。¹⁶《大蒜元》及其後的作品《蒜狂》（*Agliomania*）（2008–2010）不僅關注這一情況，還提出一個想法：在經濟危機後，大蒜或許可以成為一種金本位形式。雖然無法確知這個作品是預見了2008年的那場經濟危機，還是把當時發生在阿根廷的危機帶到了紐約街頭展現，但它確實創造了一個空間，用來虛構一個不一樣的經濟，其基礎是可口的植物和生長著狂野信號的空氣。無線電波在這裡被處理成了給養，而貿易則變成了所有人送給所有人的普通的（儘管也是令人不安的）禮物。這樣的作品給城市提供了自我檢視的工具。行人停下來，打聽是怎麼回事。一旦他們知道是什麼，他們就會問，如果是這樣，那麼還有什麼會發生呢？就是在這個時間點上，藝術作品和現實重現之間出現了交相輝映。讓人們重新認識的不是作品，而是他們本來認為理所當然的一切。

同時，2002至2003年出現了這個作品的另一版本《大蒜元2030》(Garlic=Rich Air 2030)，它帶我們回到未來的2030年，讓我們目睹以大蒜交易為基礎的股票市場如何在一個平行的虛構首都起起伏伏。¹⁷換句話說，這樣一個未來具有矛盾性。這些交易形式或許是從未來生態烏托邦蔓延到現在的第一批蔓草，但它們同時也可能是一種新型公司生命體的先聲——這種生命體由編碼器官、大蒜汁、高頻寬信仰系統，以及新的刺激—反應方式構成。它們搬演的未來誕生於現在的各種危機中，且這個未來已經被扯向多個方向。在這樣的未來中採取行動，就是在現在採取行動。

鄭淑麗有一系列作品在城市某些區域設立了堆肥系統；這些作品不那麼依賴幻想，或者可以說，它們以看似實際的虛構為基礎。例如，在《城市堆肥》(Composting the City) (2012) 中，堆肥容器被分發到各處，收集餐館和家庭肥源。廚餘被用監測濕度和其他指標的技術系統監控，且監控可以在網上進行。主要參與者包括蟲子、技術人員，以及準備食物、吃掉食物的人。廢料的收集和運送成了城市脈動可見的一部分。未來以切實的方式成形，同時還伴隨著一種技術的出現，它尚未穩定，因此需要驚人的想像力來參與。一個系統剛被發明時，尚未被視為理所當然、尚未被推到日常生活的背景去——維繫這嶄新的一刻至關重要。如果要透過一個並行的「非自然」生態體系來理解城市本身的生態如何運作，就是要詢問，集體如何才能創造新的語言，來重新描述混沌 (entropy) 之不可避免。鄭淑麗同時還創作了一個題為《網路堆肥》(Composting the Net) (2012) 的並行作品，把郵件列表檔案庫做動畫處理，來討論網路文化的未來。¹⁸對此類問題的討論常常只關注保留和儲存的問題，但鄭淑麗卻將檔案庫處理成了一行行交疊的文字，這些字行被粉碎成單個字符，落到電腦螢幕底部，堆積成為土壤。從這些文本的腐植質中，動畫植物新芽破土而出。

有些人可能會認為，後者很容易會被解讀太圖像化；但是，這個生態維度實際上還伴隨著另一個系統平臺的創作，並伴隨著能動性 (agency) 的再次調動。和奧地利林茲的施達特維爾克斯達特 (Stadtwerkstatt) 藝

術家中心的弗朗茲·薩韋爾 (Franz Xaver) 和太郎 (Taro)、長期合作夥伴馬丁·豪斯 (Martin Howse) 以及其他人一起，鄭淑麗最近建立了一個菌類創作藝術家合作群：「菌絲網絡社會」(Mycelium Network Society) (於2017年在柏林Transmediale新媒體藝術節啟動)。菌類組織具有交結成網的能力，包括透過化學傳遞來相互溝通的能力。鄭淑麗及其合作者用讓人思考的方式，把菌類這些能力與無線電網路相連結。¹⁹在一種歷史悠久、自帶高級網路的物種 (菌類) 身上加上一種媒體維度，為我們提供了一種新語言，將生控體系統 (cybernetic organism) 作為真菌來思考。這個作品提出一個問題：既然菌類組織活在各種維度之中，那麼，當它面對電磁維度的持續干預時，它是如何開始與之互動的呢？或許可以說，這正是本文開篇提出的問題，只不過問題大小有所不同：我們如何在「當下」開創一種生活，讓媒體也成為其生態體系的一部分？

如何創造生活正是鄭淑麗不斷探究的問題。她已把自己的存在作為賭注，押到了網路創造相互關係的能力上去。在我最後想在此討論的作品系列中，就出現了這個問題。「寄物櫃嬰兒」(Locker Baby) 系列 (2001–2012) 由三部分組成：《Baby Play》(2001年於東京NTT[ICC]展出)、《Baby Love》(2005年由巴黎的東京宮委託)，以及《Baby Work》(2012年聖荷西ZERO1雙年展)。作品中的嬰兒是一個粉紅色、無特質、看上去有塑膠感的嬰兒模板。這個嬰兒的微縮特徵讓它看起來很可愛，但因為它沒有個性化特點，因而也顯得有點可怕。

在第一個裝置《Baby Play》中，這個嬰兒是名桌上足球球員，有一個透明的、成人大小的身體。在第二個作品《Baby Love》中，六個嬰兒坐在巨大的茶杯裡，茶杯像樂園碰碰車一樣的移動，循環播放著MP3格式的爱情歌曲——這些歌曲是網上參與者們上傳的。嬰兒們彼此之間有無線區域網路聯繫。觀眾中愛冒險的可以選擇和其中一個嬰兒一起坐在茶杯裡，並掌控方向。在《Baby Work》中，嬰兒的角色調換給了觀眾。他們的任務是進入一個裝電子廢物 (即壞鍵盤上拆下的按鍵) 的房間，把按鍵裝到一個板子上，這個板子根據按鍵的不同排放可以發出不同聲

音。這裡的嬰兒以動畫形象出現，它擊打鍵盤，不停地打壞按鍵。這個嬰兒代表了本我 (id)，是無拘無束的欲望，在網路上找到了自己的展現方式，但同時，我們也能在把電子廢物重新組裝的耐心工作之中，找到這個嬰兒。從某種意義上我們可以說，這種組合濃縮了鄭淑麗關注的許多問題。由於我們就在這些電子廢物構成的風景之中生活，所以，在尋找用來表達欲望、實現欲望的語言的同時，精確的垃圾分類有迫在眉睫的必要性。

1. 對這個潮流諸多方面的記錄，請參見以下作品：Marco Deseriis and Giuseppe Maano, *Net. Art: L'arte della connessione* (Milan: Shake Edizioni, 2003); Tilman Baumgärtel, *net.art: Materialien zur Netzkunst* (Nuremberg: Verlag für modern Kunst, 1999) 與 *net.art 2.0: Neue Materialien zur Netzkunst* (Nuremberg: Verlag für modern Kunst, 2001); Rachel Greene, *Internet Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004); 以及 Josephine Bosma, *Nettitudes: Let's Talk Net Art* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers; Amsterdam: Institute for Network Cultures, 2011)。
2. 紐約「根」藝術館 (Rhizome) 的「網路藝術集」(Net Art Anthology) 包括了鄭淑麗《布蘭登》(1998–1999) 的修復版。見 <https://anthology.rhizome.org/brandon>。
3. 這個組織現已更名為 Waag, Technology and Society (測量所：技術與社會)。
4. 例子請見網路安全及品牌運作公司「新知識」(New Knowledge) 的報告《網際網路研究機構的策略及修辭》(*The Tactics and Tropes of the Internet Research Agency*) (2018) 中對「浸入式影響生態系統」(immersive influence ecosystem) 的描述。對美國以外國家相關活動的分析尚未公布。
5. 這個計劃具有自己的獨特之處，它利用一些技術重新展示這個互動性作品，模仿原作年代特有的軟體；重要的是，這個計劃讓這些技術能在網路上公開被取得。參見 Deena Engel, Laurel Hinkson, Joanna Phillips, and Marion Thane, "Reconstructing *Brandon* (1998–99): A Cross-disciplinary Digital Humanities Study of Shu Lea Cheang's Early Web Artwork," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (2018)。
6. *UKI Virus Rising* (2018)，三頻道裝置，光州雙年展。作品片段請見鄭淑麗的 YouTube 頻道，參閱於 2019 年 1 月 8 日，<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEo5hAVK6G4>。
7. Claude E. Shannon, "A Mathematical Theory of Communication," *Bell System Technical Journal* 27 (July / October 1948): 379–423 and 623–56。
8. 這個設計主題在為無線上網作品 *Take 2030* (2005) 設計的電腦中再次出現，作品合作者為阿列克謝·布里諾夫 (Alexei Blinov) 和伊爾瑟·布萊克 (Ilse Black)。
9. 部分作品可在網路上瀏覽，見 NTT InterCommunication 中心網站，<http://www.ntticc.or.jp/en/archive/works/buy-one-get-one>。
10. 參見 Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000)。

11. 《3x3x6》的發布會，題為「轉型中的民主：第四次工業革命中的自由、藝術與合作行動」，由唐鳳、保羅·普雷西亞多 (Paul B. Preciado) 和鄭淑麗進行對談，舉辦於 2018 年 11 月，參閱於 2019 年 1 月 8 日，<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtMXEzF02Ow&feature=youtu.be>。
12. 《紙老虎電視》網站 (Paper Tiger Television online)，參閱於 2019 年 1 月 8 日，<http://www.papertiger.org>。
13. 鄭淑麗一直在積極努力激起對這個議題的公共討論，並意圖激發出更多訊息。例子請見《數位文化雜誌》(*Magazine des cultures digitales*) 第 76 期她主編的特刊《我們養錢、我們吃錢、我們屙錢》(*We Grow Money, We Eat Money, We Shit Money*) (2015)。
14. 對這些主題的詳述，請參見 Marina Vishmidt, *Speculation as a Mode of Production* (Leiden: Brill, 2018)。
15. Armin Medosch, "Greening the Network Commons," *The Next Layer*, June 10, 2013, 參閱於 2019 年 1 月 8 日，<http://www.thenextlayer.org/comment/358.html>。
16. 在當時某些時間點上，這些組織在技術和觀念上都比大公司超前，而這些大公司是到後來才試圖要強迫頻道標準化。例子請參見倫敦的組織 Consume (消費) 以及 spc.org 的事蹟。鄭淑麗與這兩個組織都有積極交流。
17. 參見《大蒜元 2030》(*Garlic=Rich Air 2030*) 的網頁 <http://garlic03.worldofprojects.info>。紐約的「根」藝術館 (Rhizome) 於 2019 年 1 至 5 月把這個作品作為他們「網路藝術集」(Net Art Anthology) 系列的一部分重新展出。
18. 參見 AAAAN.net 上安奈特·戴克 (Annet Dekker) 對鄭淑麗的採訪。這是「網路藝術品：網上檔案庫」(NetArtWorks: Online Archives) (2012 年 5 月 12 日) 的一部分，參閱於 2019 年 1 月 8 日，<http://aaaan.net/shu-lea-cheang-composting-the-net>。
19. 參見 Peter McCoy, *Radical Mycology: A Treatise on Seeing and Working with Mushrooms* (Portland, OR: Chthaeus Press, 2016)。