

Student Name: Yilan Men

P Number: 2006394

Programme of Study: Fine Art

Ways of Thinking Lecture's Name: Alex Duncan

Tasks in the order I received them:

- 1. Manifesto Writing = 550 words**
- 2. Observational Writing = 586 words**
- 3. Exhibition Writing = 542 words**

Task 1: Manifesto Writing

1. Women's presence should be seen, women's voice should be heard, women's work should be appreciated. Women should be equally treated.
2. "I didn't say or do anything!"
"You could have said or done something."
3. Trying so hard to break the rule and yet unconsciously living by it.
4. When you exonerate those men for what they say and do, you are giving away women's discourse space.
5. Dreams will not come true if only wishing upon stars. Dreams come true only when digging in the mud.
6. Tearing, splitting, and struggling of the inner world is the very theme of powerless ordinary people's lives.
7. Everyone lives with invisible restraints and inevitable life background.
8. When someone acts in the name of patriotism, he is doing something bad or planning to do so.

Women's presence should be seen, women's voice should be heard, women's work should be appreciated. Women should be equally treated.

As more and more women are awake to feminine consciousness in China, sexism, a severe issue that has been deliberately ignored for years, is now nonnegligible to Chinese society.

As reported by official news media in China, most front-line workers are women during the coronavirus outbreak. However, there are scenes in an attempt to obliterate the contributions of female in the fight against the epidemic in a television drama – “Heroes in Harm's Way”, which is funded by the Chinese government (Wang, 2020). Moreover, comparing with the male characters, many of the female characters play a peripheral role, which has been considered offensive by many (Allen, 2020).



Fig 1. Nurses at a Hospital in Wuhan

The facts stated above have caused a great outcry on Chinese social media not long after the TV drama aired. Feminist activists claimed that it was a blatant instance of persistent sexism in Chinese society, not only during the outbreak but also in general (Wang, 2020).

This is not the first time that female contributions have been negated by the mainstream media with the tacit approval of the government. Women are also marginalised in other aspects of their mediated correlation, alongside the approaches in which women are represented by and contained in media content (Ross and Padovani, 2017). Nevertheless, this is the first time that these acts drew such a level of ire over them. This incident reflects that the need for Chinese women to be treated equally is no longer completely suppressed.

“I didn’t say or do anything!” “You could have said or done something.” – Why are men reluctant to empathize with women?

Misogyny still has a profound and extensive impact on Chinese culture and society. When there are cases of domestic abuse that appal society, there is always no lack of empathy between men and the perpetrator. This is because men, who are sexual subjects in a patriarchal society, have a bond between them – male homosocial desire. This bond is based on misogyny (Chizuko, 2015); thus, it repels the act of empathizing with women, who are objectified in the male gaze.

The act of assimilation and exclusion practised by men in order to become men must be performed by three individuals: objectifying a woman and integrate with the other man. When a man attempts to relate to women, he is deviating from men's association. Under the gender binary system, straying from the world of men can be equivalent to being "feminised" (Chizuko, 2015). Therefore, trying to identify with women is a precarious behaviour.

Trying so hard to break the rules and yet unconsciously living by it: all feminists are misogynists.

The heterosexuality system delineates women in the division of the two sexes to be the reproducer. Women are oppressed not only because they are reproducers, but also because they are separated from the reproduction labour and the products of its result – children. They are occupied by the patriarchy (Chizuko, 2020).

Consequently, the definition of “women” existed before the birth of individuals, and then the designation of “you are a woman” is received by individuals from others; accordingly, when individuals become women, the historical misogyny that this delineation bears has to be accepted by them first. Hence, all feminists start with misogyny (Chizuko, 2015).

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Task 2: Observational Writing

Sometimes the truth is concealed by the cultural environment constructed by power. Michel Foucault suggested in "Truth and Power" (2020 ed.) that truth itself is a product of power. This essay will analyse an image released eight months ago towards the beginning of the pandemic, which was forcefully blocked by the local authorities. I will discuss the ideas of the intertextuality and the iconicity of signs.

It is not just an "Error Sign"

Back at the first coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, China, where the pandemic started, the city of a population of over 11 million was locked down. There were not adequate medical resources to take care of that many patients, and there were not abundant supplies for people to live on. As a result, a lot of Wuhan citizens were posting online for help, but their posts were all blocked by the government in the name of causing panic or spreading rumours. People were in desperate situations: the one who starved to death during home quarantine, the one who jumped off a bridge for having no access to medical care and fear of infecting his family. The posts that documented these real-life cases were erased for we must have a "correct collective memory" (China Economy Net, 2020). Thus, 'truth' exists in a 'circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it' (Foucault, 2020 ed.), the voices of the subjugated are rarely heard.

On 4th April 2020, China observed a moment of silence and sounded air raid sirens to mourn those who died. Meanwhile, the author of the image issued the post on Weibo and said, "My condolence.". The image is to express the anger towards the government, and to send a message that the government is responsible for unnecessary deaths. It is based on a sign which has a white exclamation mark in it which pops up on Weibo when a post is blocked or deleted by force.



Fig 2. *Condolence*, 吉士代代子, 2020



Fig2. The Original Error Sign, 2020

“Nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign” (Peirce, 1958, p. 172).

Cultural acquisition of object traits acting on human psychological perception can be manifested as proximity and mutual association; the explanation of it is iconicity. Image, a form of meaning perception based on human visual experience and the basic feature of iconicity (Hu, 2014). The recreated image continued to use the colour and the outer shape of the error sign, so such traits were retained. The reflecting and interweaving relationship of texts, so called intertextuality (Han, 2019), is presented in the recreation process as well. Candles are often used as a sign of mourning due to their historical background in Chinese culture as lights guiding the souls of the dead in the mourning hall, and the shape of the candle in the image is identical with a reversed exclamation mark.

Hence, the act of observing a moment of silence and the act of silencing voices for help, and the anger towards the government and the grief towards the dead are associated together. Therefore, people could understand the meanings and relate to the emotions lay behind the image.

In conclusion, for such a simple image, it is rich in iconicity and intertextuality. Moreover, its political message was received loud and clear as demonstrated by the quick removal of the

post by the authorities. However, except the few who had seen the post among the majority, the “correct collective memory” has inevitably displaced most people’s real memories. From this example, Foucault’s position on truth and power is strongly supported – truth belongs to the powerful.

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Figure 2. The Original Error Sign, Weibo, (2020). Accessed from: https://weibo.com/sabrina3166?refer_flag=1005055010_&is_all=1 [Accessed on 4th April 2020]

Task 3: Exhibition Writing

“Suffering Steels to Succeed (玉汝于成)”: Yulin Pan’s Artistic Life

At the end of the porch at the entrance of the exhibition hall hangs the very significant piece of Yulin Pan’s work on a glass wall – her *Self Portrait* (1945). In this work, she looks confident, firm, and calm; these qualities are not only Pan’s idealised self-image, but also common characteristics of women’s in her work.



Fig 3. *Self Portrait*, Pan Yulin, 1945

This differs from other women who eradicate the old and foster the new of her time, Pan had a past which made her despised, caused misery for her entire life, and was repeatedly made public by the media. She was born poor, her parents died in her early years, and then she was sold to a brothel by her uncle. Not until she was taken as a concubine at the age of eighteen that she escaped from the bottom of society. This experience led to her expulsion from Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts and her unpreparedness to study in France. Furthermore, it catalysed her lifetime of exploration of her social identity as a woman, therefore, female themed works had become her most typical artistic symbol (Xue, 2020).

Her works also reflect the complex personal features brought by the erratic background of her life. Yulin Pan focused her painting on women, with female portraits and nudes. They are both the theme of Pan's exploration and the carrier of the oriental aesthetic charm retained

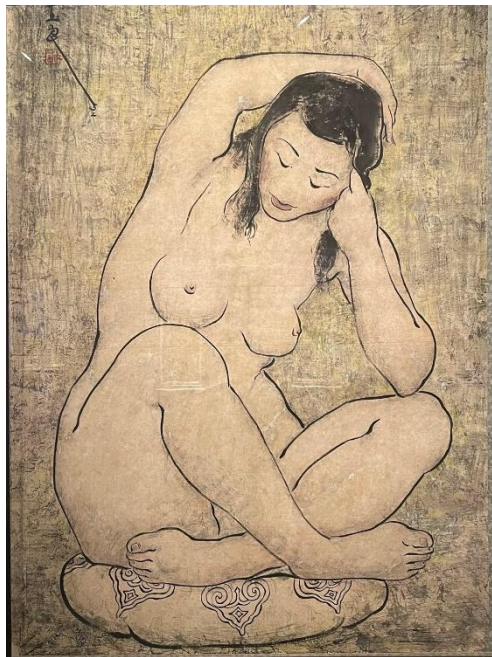


Fig 4. A Woman Pulling Her Hair, Pan Yulin, 1952

in her works, which was procured by the feeling of homesickness while she was alone in France. Additionally, Pan explored diverse art forms and discovered the combination of Chinese line drawing with Western techniques formed the “new line drawing”. In her works of line drawing, these vigorous lines play an essential role in composing the picture, so they are called “Yulin Iron Lines”. The content and characteristics Yulin Pan showed in her works render an interesting outcome – there is neither male gaze nor male presence in the whole exhibition hall, or even male existence is refused (He, 2020).

Why do the works of Yulin Pan need to be exhibited? As the first female leader of the western painting department in academies of fine arts in China (He, 2020), she is representative. Meanwhile, her life of hardship made her act of breaking free from the limitations of times and the social prejudice more significant. Moreover, the awakening to feminine consciousness in China requires such an emblematic figure to be presented in a museum, which carries the idea of a society (Hu, 2018).

To echo Pan's periodic life, the exhibition hall is divided into three floors and the walls are in different colours. The purpose of the glass wall mentioned before is not merely for the visitors to see through her life, but also for people to discuss about women's relationship between seeing and being seen in this society (He, 2020). These curatorial approaches are in response to the shift in thinking that museums are no longer just "containers" for artworks and visitors are no longer passive information receivers and bystanders (Li, 2020). Thus, the curatorial is a

“preliminary decision” before “the subject/object or curator/viewer” (Martinon, 2013). This approach makes us challenge the conventional binarism in curation and in societal norms.



Fig 5. Exhibition Hall, 2020

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