

ART REVIEW

Victoria East | 維多利亞之東 | 2017
Multi-Channel Video Installation
by Law Yuk-mui

ARTFORUM
艺术论坛



羅玉梅：維多利亞之東 | Law Yuk-mui: Victoria East, exhibition review by Morgan Wong
Published on art forum.com.cn (18-5-2017)

羅玉梅在錄映太奇“FUSE”藝術家駐留計劃的展覽取名“維多利亞之東”。“維多利亞”指的是英殖早期香港島政經中心地帶的舊稱，但“維多利亞之東”卻從未曾作為地名出現於任何文獻記錄中。虛實之間透露出藝術家矛盾的態度：填海造地工程一方面掩埋了本地歷史，另一方面又建構了新的敘事，且兩者常常在不同維度上彼此交錯。延續藝術家去年於新加坡當代藝術館（ICA Singapore）展出的作品《垃圾灣、植物：始於1990》中的線索，羅玉梅在此次展覽中進一步推展了她對香港新市鎮的研究及再想像。

昏暗的展廳中央放著錄像作品《維多利亞之東》，碧綠的水底影像不但被投射在懸掛著的玻璃上，更被折射到展廳的地面及牆壁。通過這樣的展示方式，羅玉梅對新界將軍澳新市鎮因開發而填沒的海洋進行了想像上的重構，因物理限制而出現的方正影像就像對為經濟發展而犧牲天然海岸的社會整體的微妙控訴。在展廳後方《最後的海岸》循環播放的影像中，燒焊工人正小心翼翼地用電弧焊在鋼板上刻劃一條彎曲的線。在羅玉梅的創作中，文本、想法與執行往往保持高度一致：片中的鋼鐵焊接工藝來自因新市鎮發展而消失的造船與拆船業，而工人刻畫的正是最後一條天然的海岸線；藝術家則在記錄歷史的同時，也對未來提出了某種含蓄的警示。

儘管在近年香港人的日常生活裡，警示常常化作各種立場鮮明的旗幟，而後者也是探討歷史政治議題的作品經常選取的符號，但羅玉梅的《旗幟》卻偏偏強調去政治性。雖然作品的素材皆來自網絡上蒐集的曾於該區懸掛的青天白日滿地紅旗，但定格動畫中只留下旗的輪廓，並以幾近全彩的顏色像走馬燈一樣填滿每一面旗，旗幟的象徵意義因此被掏空，但這種去除政治性的做法跟殖民政府於香港回歸前對該區的“拆遷發展”行為似乎別無二致，藝術家在此處消除政治意味也讓人猜測是否另有深意。

展覽秉承羅玉梅處理史料時一貫的冷靜態度，一層一層從歷史宏觀中發掘出不同的細微線索。串聯不同事件的主線不單只有時間，更有一種對消逝的不安。若《最後的海岸》是在掌控一條物理上的線，那麼整個展覽羅玉梅則是為時間線訂下不同的註腳——地緣政治的消失、殖民歷史的殘存，以及社會發展的今昔。

Law Yuk-mui named her Videotage FUSE Artist Residency exhibition 'Victoria East'. 'Victoria' is the former name of the central economic and political zone on Hong Kong Island in the early colonial period. However, 'Victoria East' has never appeared in any historical documents. The artist's sense of

contradiction is revealed between fiction and reality: reclamation projects are concealing local history on the one hand, they are constructing new narratives on the other and the two always intertwine with each other on different dimensions. Extending the elements in her work *On Junk Bay, The Plant : 1990 – present* showed in the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore last year, Law Yuk-mui has further developed her studies and reimagination of new towns in this exhibition.

In the dimmed exhibition hall, the video work *Victoria East* is being played at the centre. The jade green underwater images aren't only projected on the hanging glass, but also refracted on the floor and wall of the exhibition hall. Through this presentation, Law Yuk-mui reconstructs the imagination of the sea reclaimed for the new town development in Tseung Kwan O in the New Territories. The square images resulted from physical restrictions are like a subtle accusation against economic development that has sacrificed the natural coast. At the back of the exhibition hall, *The Last Coast* is being played on loop. In the video, the welding worker is cautiously carving a curve on the steel plate with arc welding. In Law Yuk-mui's artworks, the text, the concept and the execution are often kept highly consistent: the craft of steel welding shown in the video is stemmed from the shipbuilding industry and ship demolition industry, which have disappeared thanks to new town development. The welding worker is carving the last natural coastal line; the artist is issuing an implicit warning for the future while documenting history. Yet, in recent years, the warning messages Hong Kong people give out in daily life are usually in the form of explicit flags. Flags are typical symbols used to investigate historical and political issues. Law Yuk-mui, however, has deliberately ridded flag of political flavour. The work is made from the images collected from the Internet of the flags of Republic of China (aka 'Blue Sky, White Sun and a Wholly Red Earth') that were once raised in that area. The images are captured in screenshots, leaving only the silhouette of the flags visible. Moreover, every flag is practically filled with full colours just like a revolving lantern. The symbolic meaning of the flags is thus stripped off. Yet, removing the political nature in such a way is no different from the 'demolition and relocation' development project conducted in the area by the colonial government before the handover of Hong Kong. The artist's action of removing political flavour from the work leaves people speculating whether there is a deeper layer of meaning.

Succeeding her usual nonchalant attitude towards the treatment of history, Law Yuk-mui has excavated fine details from the macro-narrative of history layer by layer in this exhibition as well. The axis linking up different events isn't only time, but also a sense of uneasiness towards what have disappeared. If *The Last Coast* were governing a physical line, then Law Yuk-mui would be putting different footnotes on the timeline throughout the exhibition – the disappearance of geopolitics, the remnants of colonial history and the evolution of social development.