

カタストロフと美術のちから

Catastrophe and the Power of Art



tone, they provide a striking contrast to Stallaerts's works. Huang's paintings, however, share something with those of Stallaerts in terms of their surreal, enigmatic settings. *Silent Night* (2013) shows a Christmas tree that has caught fire on this holy night, while *Red Carpet Dream #3* (2012) depicts a newlywed couple with nobody to wish them well.

Abstract and Invisible Catastrophes

The Fukushima Accident of 2011 thrust the issue of nuclear energy in front of us once again. As radioactivity is invisible, nuclear contamination is not immediately apparent, and the ominously unfamiliar word "microsievert" has us vacillating between hope and despair in the aftermath of the incident. For Japan, a country that experienced the tragedy of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the phrase "history repeats itself" is a particularly painful one to hear. In this sense, Miriam Cahn's *atombomben / atom bombs* (04.02.1988) (1988) evokes in us a complex emotional state. Even as we are instinctively mesmerized by the beauty of this work, where an abstract mix of vivid watercolors explodes within the frame, upon learning that the subject of the piece is nuclear explosion, our sense of reason tells us that we ought to harbor feelings of reprehension for this image, as citizens of a country that has been a victim of the atom bomb. In this way, our subjectivity is split.

Takeda Shimpei's "Trace" (2012) resembles a series of black-and-white photographs of stars in the night sky. In fact, however, they are photograms that were made by collecting soil from various areas in the wake of the Fukushima Accident, the radiation in which left marks on photography films. It is, in short, an attempt to visualize the radioactive contamination. Hidakawa Kota's *Black color timer* (2016-2017), on the other hand, are portraits of workers at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant after the accident that were painted black on clocks. These workers are in fact nameless heroes who have gathered from various regions across Japan to clean up after the Fukushima Accident, despite working conditions that are hardly palatable. The abstract method used to depict them in monochrome black, however, makes it impossible to identify them as individuals. While the diversity of possible interpretations associated with abstract images gives them a particular uncertainty, once we recog-

nize the mushroom cloud, and we realize that the white dots are radiation and the portraits are of manual laborers in protective clothing, the intensity of these images becomes amplified in our minds, and it becomes impossible to read them as something else. This is the power of abstract expression.

Thomas Demand's *Control Room* (2011) depicts the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, too. The work is based on the press photograph shot right after the power supply returned a few days after the earthquake. Demand took the photograph of a model that he made out of paper, based on the press photograph. The fragility of the building, as seen in collapsing ceiling, resonates uncannily with the brittleness of paper. Mirosław Balka's *Soap Corridor* (1993/2018) is an installation where visitors are invited to walk through a corridor smeared with soap while smelling it. For Balka, soap is something that is used to wash and clean both newborn babies and dead bodies, and therefore serves as a metaphor for birth and death. Balka's hometown of Otwock, a suburban area outside of Warsaw that used to house a Jewish ghetto during World War II. This was the site of Nazi's many massacres, where a number of people were sent to concentration camps from. Also associated with this history is the fact that Jews were given soap when they were about to be sent to the gas chamber, as well as the myth that soap was made from the dead bodies of Jews who had been killed.⁷ The abstract can also serve as a starting point for a chain of words and images.

Conversely, Isaac Julien's *PLAYTIME* (2014) is a dramatic video installation that depicts the relationship between human beings and capital, using examples such as a hedge fund manager working in London, the financial capital par excellence; a photographer who loses all his assets in Reykjavik, a city that was emblematic of the 2008 global financial crisis; and Filipina maid who has left the country to go and work in Dubai, a symbolic hub of new capital. Although the idea for this work first came to Julien in the wake of the collapse of Lehman Brothers,⁸ one of the themes of the piece is the visualization of a capital that is becoming increasingly obscure and invisible, stored and accumulated today on computer servers.⁹ Julien's film also interrogates the relationship between the art market and a network of glob-

ally interconnected capital, through scenes involving an art adviser talking about the soaring prices of works of contemporary art, and an art auctioneer speaking about the recovery of the market in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

Imagining Catastrophe

Oliver Laric's *Versions (Missile Variations)* (2010) was produced after the artist got the idea for the work from composite photographs of rocket missiles being fired that were released by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in 2008. These images of multiple missiles zigzagging through the air are so clearly fake as to invite laughter, but at the same time they explore the significance of images on the internet in an era of fake news, where the truth is often opaque. In contrast, Fujii Hikaru's *The Primary Fact* (2018) examines the meaning of investigative research and the role of art in such an era. For this project, Fujii interviewed researchers conducting an investigation into the puzzling case of a mass grave of some 80 young men who had been executed and buried in a suburb of Athens. A theory posits that they were related to a group of aristocrats who had failed in an attempted insurgency in the 7th century B.C. and this was one of the reasons why Athens shifted towards a democratic system in the 6th century B.C., but Fujii insists that we cannot know the fact about this matter. In a post-truth era where groundless discourse litters the space of the internet, it is worth giving some thought to the danger of facile thinking, and the importance of pursuing the truth.

Shiva Ahmadi's *The Mesh* (2016) and *The Wall* (2016) are satirical paintings that depict, with a critical eye, the reality of how those in power monopolize oil and other resources that generate wealth, causing wars and other conflicts that force ordinary people to make various sacrifices. Imagination is an indispensable resource when it comes to decoding artworks that make liberal use of symbolism, by using animals as substitutes for humans, for instance. In Mona Hatoum's *Misbah* (2006-2007), images of light that depict soldiers carrying guns or explosions are projected using lanterns as they revolve around the gallery. Using cheap symbolism, Hatoum seems to ridicule the stereotypes prevalent in the Western world that equate the Middle East

with war. Ikeda Manabu's *Foretold* (2008) depicts a massive wave that swallows up entire buildings, ships, cars, and trees. Looking at this work in the wake of 3.11 gives one the bizarre notion that it perhaps forewarned us of the tsunami. Imagination and reality are inextricably intertwined.

Section II: Creation from Destruction The Power of Art

Throughout the history of the modern and contemporary era, countless artists have produced works and pursued practices that seek to build a better society. Some examples of this would be *The Hiroshima Panels* (1950-1982) by Maruki Iri and Toshi, which sought to convey the tragedy and misery of the atomic bomb to posterity, or reportage-style painting *Sunagawa No. 5* (1955) by Nakamura Hiroshi, which depicts the struggle against the expansion of American military bases in Sunagawa, in an accusatory tone. Joseph Beuys' project *7000 Oaks* (1982-1987), which began in Kassel, Germany, involved the planting of trees in order to call attention to environmental issues, a direct intervention into actual society. The second half of this exhibition explores the power of art to turn the negative into the positive.

Individual Action: Activism that Confronts Disaster

Section II opens with Ai Weiwei's large-scale installation *Odyssey* (2016/2018). Ai, who is also an activist who has criticized the government of his home country of China, was detained on Chinese soil and had his passport confiscated, and subsequently moved to Berlin in 2015. There had been a heated debate over the refugee issue in Germany at the time, and Ai went to report on and document the situation near the country borders in various areas, as well as conditions in refugee camps, and used his own social media accounts to transmit this information to the world. The work that resulted from this activity of his is *Odyssey*, a wallpaper installation that depicts people crossing oceans using boats, or living in tents. Over the course of this research, Ai was apparently indignant that those who live charmed lives in the free world are almost completely unconcerned about human suffering.¹⁰ Equally reprehensible is the nonchalance of Japan, and the Japanese government's treatment of the refugee issue, having only recognized 708 out of 60,674 ap-

トーマス・デマンド

Thomas Demand

1964年ドイツ、ミュンヘン生まれ、ベルリンとロサンゼルス在住。

デュッセルドルフ芸術アカデミーで彫刻を学び、ロンドン大学ゴールドスミス・カレッジにて修士号取得、ドイツを代表する現代美術作家のひとり。日常的な風景や歴史的な事件の現場などをモチーフに、ほぼ実物大の紙の模型を制作し、それを撮影した写真作品を発表している。もともとなるのは新聞や雑誌、あるいはインターネット上のイメージだが、写真は模型とほぼ同じ大きさにプリントされる。作品には人物は登場せず、それにより鑑賞者自身がその場面の観察者となってイメージの中に入り込んでゆくことが意図されている。一見すると実際に場所そのものを撮影した写真のようだが、紙という素材の際立った均質さや明瞭なエッジといった、イメージをコピーする過程で生じる現実との微妙なずれが違和感となって徐々に浮かび上がる。

《制御室》(2011年)は、東日本大震災の津波により全ての電源を喪失し、原子炉冷却機能を失った福島第一原子力発電所の制御室を再現した作品。放射線量と戦いながら電源回復に務めた作業員が撮影した、当時世界中のメディアで報道された写真を用いている。この制御室はその後復旧作業の最前線となった。現実を精巧にコピーしていながらどこか現実味のないデマンド作品の持つ虚構性は、東日本大震災ときにメディアに氾濫した、まるで嘘のような現実を捉えたイメージの数々を思い起こさせる。[KH]

Born in Munich, Germany in 1964, and currently based in Berlin and Los Angeles.

Thomas Demand studied sculpture at Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and received his master's degree from Goldsmiths College, University of London. He is one of the major contemporary artists from Germany. Using motifs of ordinary scenery and scenes of historic incidents, he makes real-size paper maquettes and photographs them for his work. The original images are taken from newspapers, magazines and the Internet, and the photographs are printed in the same size as the maquettes. No person appears in the work, and therefore, the viewer is invited to enter the image as an observer of that scene. At first glance, the work looks like a picture of the actual place of the incident, but subtle deviation from the reality that occurs in the process of copying the image, such as the extremely uniform quality and clear edges of paper as a material, gradually emerges as something uncomfortable.

Control Room (2011) shows a reproduction of the control room of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, which faced total power failure and the loss of nuclear reactor cooling function that followed. It is based on the photographs which were taken by a plant worker who attempted to recover power while fighting against radiation dose, and the pictures were reported on media around the world. This control room became the frontline of the restoration work afterwards. The fictional quality of Demand's works, which are unrealistic somehow while copying reality elaborately, reminds us of the images capturing unbelievable reality that flooded the media at the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake.[KH]



制御室 / Control Room / 2011