Bypassing the Camera: The Image Production Possibilities of Taiwanese Experimental Images

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Abstract
In the article, Experiment - My Film History by Taiwanese artist, Kao Chung-Li, Li stated that "animation" served as cameraless, hand-made, and physically strong "images" that remind us of the importance of "how images are produced". They reproduce and transform Taiwan's image history. Like "cameraless film" or "drawn-on-film animation", Kao reassembles ready-made objects, old photographic film, projectors, and other such things through the "physical properties" of animation, serving as a component of his own resistance to Western experimental films. This paper discusses the image production conditions of Kao's "cameraless film" works, discussing the bodies, images, and physical properties in animation. Then, the physical performance, news narrative, and theater properties of living newspapers are compared to the narrative aesthetics in Taiwanese report dramas. With the aesthetic dialect of two kinds of moving images, this paper raises the image production possibilities of Taiwanese experimental images.

Keywords: cameraless film, Drawn-on-film animation, Taiwanese experimental images

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Introduction

In an article for Experiment: My Film History, Kao Chung-Li stated: "...I have previously written an article in which I summarize the entirety of western film history as one that focuses on the camera (delivery side). But, without a film projector, how can one see the machine images? You would all then ask that, without a camera, where would all the machine images played by the projector come from? ...Is this truly the only way to obtain machine images? Can there be a way to bypass the relationship with the camera to obtain these machine images? Animation is an example." Kao Chung-Li uses the "physical properties" of animation, such as ready-made objects, old film, projectors, and other such assembly, as components that resist Western experimental film. "Simultaneously, they are machine images as well as image machines. This is the image reality we need to face."

The image reality referred to here is an active development and reorganization of image machines to reverse the position of the "receiving side", instead of doing this through the "machine imagery" of Western visual ontology. The active image physical components, or "animation", that Kao Chung-Li employs is comprised of such items as old cassettes, audio tape, 8 mm film, slide projectors, small flower pots, and sketches. Using the physical properties and structures of art creation tools, he establishes an anti-film methodology. If one were to use the notion of "tracing the source of an object" to understand such a methodology, this would actually lead to many misunderstandings, as well as an "I am non-western" categorization over the course of this tracing. Kao Chung-Li provides a response to this point. The artist states that this methodology was not comprised of handmade, weak images and low-resolution objects intentionally produced due to the vacancy of Western image machines. Rather, the "perception" we have towards "image machines" is exactly the "ideology" that needs to be reversed. According to Kao, the camera consciousness, the image production process, and the re-assembly of object functions actually form the starting point from which to re-transform image reality; that is, the conditions under which the spirit of an image can be produced. As a result, the remaking, reading, zooming, frame speed, cycle and other technical operations of "image machine image" stack onto the production, modification, reproduction, and other experimentation of machine image, redeeming the film narrative desired by Kao Chung-Li.

Body-Montage

For *Bypassing the Camera*, we not only transcended the delivery side of the image machine, but also bypassed Workers Leaving the Factory of the Lumiere brothers. From the visual persistence of film negative to naked eye, Kao Chung-Li provides a new type of path comprised of videos of inquiry and montage. "Bypassing the Body" enables us to enter and drive a type of "body montage" body image, requiring viewers to undergo a visual experience in which they decide for themselves on whether to "watch - not watch" and "connect - not connect". This connects the initiative of the body with the passivity of the image. In the works *Dark Alley* and *Official Ambiguity* by artist Ni Hsiang, this "unintentional" splicing method became a type of body scenery that rejects machine image splicing.

Figure 1: Ni Hsiang, *Dark Alley*, 2013.

Numerous four by six inch photos with the same subject without any particular order are posted to a wall within the same diameter. Due to the photos' dimensions and their positions on the wall, viewers are required to move, changing their own positions and movements and composing a "review, read" image. On one end, the works by Ni Hsiang align with the visual persistence of images, as well as personal differences in conditions of physical movement. Whether it be acceleration, forward motion, backward motion, deceleration, jumps, or other movements, they all proceed with the two conditions of "forming animation" and "reading frames" for images in the midst of physical movement. On another end, *Dark Alley* and *Officially Ambiguous* compose a "montage within the lens" - the artist's subjectivity constitutes an image order; as well as forms a "montage outside of the lens" - a management of the scene by the viewer's own body. This forms the link between the initiative of the body with the passivity of the image.   In the 1923 article of Kinoks: A Revolution, Dziga Vertov declares: "Now and forever, I free myself from human immobility, I am in constant motion... Now I, a camera, flying myself along their resultant, maneuvering in the chaos of movement, recording movement….Freed from the rule of sixteen-seventeen frames per second." (Vertov, 1985:17). As Vertov said, the lens consciousness, image sequence, and image physicality within Vertov's works are like a machine that produces body animations, while attempting to restore the body sensations abolished in the course of observing images.

From living newspaper to cameraless film

The "526 Incident" referred to in Ni Hsiang's *Officially Ambiguous* was a bloody conflict in 1992 sparked by issues regarding pollution and relocation in the Dalinpu Community of Kaohsiung's Xiaogang District. The content of the image serves as the artist's attempt to reenact and "correct history". Similar to a timely living newspaper with current affairs as the main theme, every image of *Officially Ambiguous* comes from an "imitative reproduction of life" following the artist's reading of the historical event. What it reproduces is not just a personal depiction of

historical events, but also a description of "an event that in itself is not reproducible". Through the "paranoid lens" the artist uses to look at events, it corresponds to the "cold lens" used for news reports.

Figure 2: Ni Hsiang, *Officially Ambiguous*, 2016.

Living newspapers originated in Russia after the Russian Revolution of 1917. The new government at that time used these "living newspapers" to conduct a form of popular education that focused on social events, while taking on a theatrical format that combined physical performances. They also had strong political propaganda functions. The body intervention in living newspapers was much like a montage of events with clear intentions. Today, the the transmission of "news" in machine images expresses several image realities: the scene of the event, the scene that is spoken, the scene of the body, and the scene of the event's extension. Or, it could be said that it is an image reality and ideology constituted by machine images. If the news produced

by machine images are a type of a cold image (cancels the image itself) that hides a political consciousness, then the "news" generated by "news material splicing" in living newspapers are a type of image politics (restoring the political nature of images). The purpose is not to restore a particular news event, but to establish a strong link with people and cancel the political reproduction of machine images through theatrical conditions with a world index and participatory body inclination. Viewing the theatrical conditions in *Official Ambiguity*, in addition to the artist's "live frame splicing", there is also the symbol of a hand-drawn "public signs". The arrangement of these scenes invites viewers to pass through a historical scene that "imitates life" but is not reproduction of it. Due to the physical intervention of viewers, what is mapped across our retinas is not only a historical event, but also a theatrical-style montage.

Bypassing the camera, Kao Chung-Li re-examines the the possibilities produced by images through the simple image of body movements. "Animation" serves as this possibility (rewriting the position and history of the camera). In addition to suggesting how image production models determine our perception, another possibility is borne regarding a sensory construct for image machines: a type of body-oriented montage with "body animation" that is non-intentionally spliced. This type of experimental image extends upon Kao Chung-Li's methodology. Furthermore, this article attempts to examine image consciousness from the "physical properties" of machine images and image machines before finally returning to the body as the carrier of "image machine image". In fact, this type of approach is a contemplation of the future image reality described in the conclusion of Kao Chung-Li's article "Experiment - My Film History". Kao states frankly that the images within the cloud economy are a type of homogenous future generated by capitalistic methods of production. "In the ultimate image machines and machine images of the cloud, no identity exists even without people." According to Kao, cloud technology mixes the toxins of "globalization". There, image machine images have a firm hold over the pereceptive modes of artistic subjects. More importantly, this perceptive model is always mixed together with the potential functions of "the West". If the physical work of artistic subjects continuously becomes immersed into these homogenous models of image production, then the result will only be the machine images of "Hollywood's strange relatives". Therefore, through the reversal and reconstruction of the delivery and recipient sides, as well as a reorganization of image production tools, a new context can be created.

Conclusion

This kind of "animation" that bypasses the camera approaches a certain "cameraless film" or "Drawn-on-film-animation" - an image production rendered by reality and hand drawn techniques. The difference is that when we initiate a body manipulation of frame rate, non-intentional splicing or "image development", we further take the montage operation to an exercise of a non-lens unit, non-linear splicing, and non-direct narration outside of the director's will. Returning to image elements and physical images, what is important is not the "ability to move", but the "how to move". If we say that the animation emphasized by Norman McLaren is actually not the art of "drawings-that-move", but rather "movements-that-are-drawn", and in which the body is used as basic coordinates that simultaneously appropriate "frame

interval movements" and other parameters for understanding, then active images are no longer just the distance set (frame rate) between two consecutive images. Instead, they are how contact is established between continuous images and bodies, as well as how the arrangement of a collective activity is arbitrarily shuttled. It can also be easier to understand the vibrations possibly influencing sub-lens units in the cliname of molecular images. Perhaps, in an identity that does not exist even without people, mixed into the cloud image collective of homogenous toxins, and bypassing the camera with the body as the objective, an active image group of Gan Qi dance can move flesh, light, and shadow in the screen of the mind.

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