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Recovering from Eternal Tribulation: On Endless Toil and Differentiated Moments of Consciousness of Wu Chia-Yun's exhibition "The Moment of Consciousness"

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Walking into the exhibition, we discovered that Wu Chia-Yun's solo exhibition "The Moment of Consciousness" represents layers of mysteries and the joy of unveiling these mysteries. Materials like plastic cover for engineering, plywood, wooden decoration, excised materials, corrugated cardboard, bubble wrap, film, stickers, paper boxes, and coils are re-deconstructed and constructed in every nook and cranny of Powen Gallery. When one walks straight into the center of the work, a sudden sense of something breaking free of fetters comes into being. That sudden impression at the same time seems to co-exist in symbiosis with ubiquitous restrictions that limit freedom and movement. This creates an oxymoron that one is in nowhere and is now here. A framework of tragedy is revealed in this contradictory relationship, repetitively taking place.

Among many works exhibited by Wu Chia-Yun, the tragic nature is clearly demonstrated by two aspects: one is the reproduction of daily life. The art production (or life at best) seems to resemble that of Sisyphus eternally and repeatedly rolling a huge boulder uphill. It shows the poverty in finding meanings and eternal helplessness that occurs as regularity in our daily life. However, Wu Chia-Yun's work does not carry the sense of repetitive and eternal toil. The boulder in "Infinite, and Gallery's Floor" is still and its relations with the surroundings are in tension. When being caught on camera adjusting the work, "At Present, and Gallery's Mezzanine" that features a monitor facing toward the dust of the ceiling, the artist joked about "our efforts in vain." Another aspect that Wu is dedicated to is the presentation of different structured facets. With the exhibition scenes constructed to present vertical impression, horizontal impression and the senses

of time and space, Wu Chia-Yun raises a more important question, that is, this tragic meaning itself is suspicious. The singularity of meaning can be discovered from the traces of endless repetitive labor revealed by the exhibition room and the static image work. However, the dynamic images reflected at the center of the exhibition hall challenges the singularity of meaning. The meanings pluralize. It is in nowhere and is everywhere. This is differentiated consciousness in unity. As the English subtitle of this exhibition shows, “the moment of consciousness” is an awakening from “dream” or “tragedy”.

“Five, Four, Three, Two” is the only film work in this exhibition. Two men and one woman in the film count down the numbers, but they never reach 1. It represents the fact that many people never reach 1 (this reminds people of the paradox that Zeno’s arrows can never reach the bullseye, and it also reminds people of Edward Yang’s “a one and a two” in which a new beginning never happens), and represents a sense of individual self-repetitive powerlessness. However, in terms of the structure, Wu Chia-Yun’s film uses relay imagery for the countdown. Man, woman, and young man freely relay in the sound sequence. The sense of relay is also expressed in the narrative breakpoints as the film replays. For example, in addition to countdown, the woman is having headaches when getting off the car, the man touching his head and then walking toward the noodle stand, the young man sitting down at the noodle stand, and then man and woman sitting in the same position, etc. The scene is in harmony as it is in the film *Inception*. The wind blowing up the roof of the stand implies a wait for wake-up as it means that some kind of external impact has occurred. The wake-up never takes place. In addition, that in the film people pass stones to one another seems to create a scene of lifting weights, but in fact the stones are light. Man and woman are repeating some action, but in fact it is the jump of consciousness to the Buddhist Alaya-vijnana-like condition. However, the half-oval curved screen and the plastic cover above hinder the full arrival of this condition.

Regarding the question of tragic cognition, for Wu Chia-Yun, it is no longer based on the unity purpose of “harmonious cognition” or “unified perception,” nor is it based on the Christian precept of “eliminating the self” or Hegelian dialectics. It is to deviate from the cognition of meaning, to withdraw from the tragic experience and reach the level of perception. To a certain degree, to solve problems of tragedy, Eastern philosophy used by artists, regardless of Buddhism or Taoism, is based on qualitative changes to the sense of happiness at a higher level of differentiated

consciousness. For Arthur Schopenhauer, the relationship between appearance and structure is about appearance and will. Will transcends the constraints of appearance. For Nietzsche, it is the world of Apollo and Bacchus. Bacchus constructs the inner turmoil at the deep layer of tragic joy and Apollo at best represents the daily commotion of tragedy. For Wu Chia-Yun, the will that does not carry meaning parallels appearance and rejoices with it. Bacchus is at the mercy of Apollo. The thin breathing, transcendence above the suffering of sentient being, and life on the edge will continue to be the themes for artists. Unification and harmony may never come, but one can survive with happiness and ease.