广州三年展 GZ Triennial

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THE THEME EXHIBITION OF THE FOURTH GUANGZHOU TRIENNIAL CURATORS

JIANG JIEHONG (CHINA)
JONATHAN WATKINS (UK)

2012/9/28-12/16 广东美术馆 2012/9/29-12/16 广州正佳广场 2012/9/29 广东美术馆广州大剧院当代馆

VENUES

GUANGDONG MUSEUM OF ART
GUANGZHOU GRANDVIEW MALL
CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY
OF GDMOA AT THE GUANGZHOU OPERA HOUSE

第四届广州三年展主题展"见所未见"

策 展 人: 姜节泓 乔纳森·沃金斯

策展助理: 罗玛·皮欧朝伏斯卡

主 办:广东美术馆

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广州大剧院

开幕时间: 2012年9月28日、29日

展览时间: 2012年9月28至12月16日

展览地点:广东美术馆,广州正佳广场,广东美术馆广州大剧院当代馆

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Curatorial Assitant: Roma PIOTROWSKA
Organiser: Guangdong Museum of Art

Co-organisers: Guangzhou Grandview Mall

Guangzhou Opera House

Opening: 28, 29 September 2012

Duration: 28 September - 16 December 2012

Venues: Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou Grandview Mall, Contemporary Art Gallery of GDMoA at the Guangzhou Opera House

OFF-SITE PROJECTS

Birmingham Billboard Project, Madeln Company, Birmingham, UK, 2 - 29 April 2012

Kan Xuan: Millet Mounds, KAN Xuan, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing,

15 September - 10 November 2012

Royal College of Art Project, GAO Shiqiang, LU Yang, WANG Yuyang and XIAO Yu, London, 21 November - 8 December 2012

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前言

视觉感知与视觉艺术: 对元问题进一步的追问

罗一平

第四届广州三年展是一个研究性的展览,从启动展开始至今,一直将自身的目光集中在对于美术馆和艺术自身相关的"元问题"的探索与思考中。这种对于核心概念形而上层面的探讨将广州三年展由传统的展示行为拓展为了一种研究行为,这种研究行为并非深藏于书斋中的理论空谈,而是以具体且实在的展览的模式,以一种实践的精神所进行的讨论。

本次三年展的启动展限定了展览所关注的对象,将关注的核心从纷繁的当代艺术 形态中抽离出来,回归到对于艺术本质和美术馆功能与形态的讨论上,提出"元问 题——回到美术馆自身"的命题,以广东美术馆改扩建工程为契机,重新审视和思 考那些关于艺术和美术馆的最为核心的问题,从思想和理论的层面,拷问美术馆乃 至当代艺术的本质属性及其关联。而跟随其后的诸个项目展则是对这一探讨的具体 和深化。"去魅中国想象"作为第一回项目展,延续了启动展的论述课题。其主要讨 论了资本化与市场化对当代艺术的侵入以及意识形态对个体性艺术创作的控制。第 二回项目展"第三自然——中国再造"更多关注的是生态性的文化理论,从人的精 神史的深层生存视角出发突出人类何处去的问题。1第三回项目展"维度——三个 艺术家的案例分析",以案例分析的方式在可见的普遍艺术现象中窥视个别性,三 位艺术家在解构、突破传统水墨价值观与笔墨规约的同时,构建了符合当下文化语 境的水墨性表达新维度。所谓维度就是一个相对概念,维度的准确标示并不仅仅取 决于自身, 而是需要依据于它在周边所处的位置。艺术作品的好坏并不能依据于其 个体的孤立美感,而是取决于其在艺术史架构中的作用与意义。而在英国伯明翰的"广 告牌计划"将展览由美术馆展厅延伸到公共空间领域,讨论艺术的边界及其与大众 和日常生活的关系。而在项目展结束之后的主题展,则是将之前项目展徘徊在艺术 与社会、艺术与自然、艺术与艺术语言以及艺术与大众生活中的具体讨论拉回到对 于艺术本质的探寻中去。从视觉艺术最为基础的视觉感官的层面,来探讨当代艺术、 艺术展览和美术馆的元问题。

主题展策展人姜节泓和乔纳森·沃金斯首先确立的是这种探讨行为的模式,即对研究方法论的构建,形成了一个"见所未见"的概念。区别于传统的主题先行的展览,本次主题展发展出一种"实践先行"的展览策略,这一具有强烈的实证主义色彩的策略思路将展览引向了一种建立在实验数据基础上的研究框架。对作品的陈列不再是展览的最终形态和终极目标,恰恰是展览研究行为的开端。首先是对于研究范围

的限定,通过对于作品的选择来限制研究的边界,随后再通过对观众的行为和展览的效果以及作品所带来的影响等研究对象的观察和对于这些原始数据的搜集,来获得展览前所不曾发现甚至不曾假设的新的知识,从而构建起新的观点甚至是理论框架。这种展览的模式所对应的是本届三年展试图通过视觉的展览,进而上升到对形而上的思想理论进行思辨性的探讨的目标。从这种层面上来看,"见所未见"更像是一个实验和搜集数据的过程,通过这样的过程,充分地去挖掘作品在视觉上乃至于视觉之外的内涵。同时通过这样的方式,由展览中的视觉图像创造和传播理论文字所无法呈现的内容。并且在一定程度上消解理论的抽象性,让三年展对于理论的探讨更加的脚踏实地和言之有物。

在展览"见所未见"中,似乎只是在传统的艺术品和艺术展览的基础上加入了一个 变量,即对于视觉感官的隔断。这种隔断却带来了极大的风险,因为它所导致的是 对于艺术这个概念所涵盖的定义范围直接的质问和怀疑。我们对于艺术种种定义, 似乎都忽视了一个最为基础的原点,那就是"可见"。当这一点被隔断之后,是否 还有艺术能够幸存?一件无法观看的艺术品是否还是艺术品?可观看的程度和作品 的艺术性是否有直接的联系?等等,便如同追问是什么创造了造物主一样,"见所 未见"将艺术的元问题从什么是艺术讲而推向了什么是可见。可见的范围需要如何 定义? 是仅仅和生理的感官相联系, 还是需要加入思想和精神的元素? 想象力是不 是一种可见? 对想象之物的观看是否可以替代视觉感官的观看? 展览前我们并不会 有任何的答案,展览后我们得到的很可能也只是一些大致的猜测和可能。重要的是, 通过将可见与未见高亮地标识出来,通过对艺术与视觉感官之间关系的质问,"见 所未见"已经提出了最有价值的元问题,表现出它作为第四届广州三年展主题展对 于元问题最直接的关注。基于这种探索的目的,展览中并没有鲁莽地完全斩断一切 视觉的可能, 所有的参展作品都有它可见的部分, 而这些可见的部分却都不是艺术 品真正的内容, 而只是一个指路牌, 将观众指向巨大的不可见的山谷。在通过主题 表现了自己对于艺术的定义之后,策展人转而通过具体的作品去进一步质询更加细 致的问题: 视觉感官与审美欣赏的关系, 以及视觉感官所具有的局限性和欺骗性对 艺术理解的影响。而更为重要的是,在实践先行的理念下,展览中必然还会提出更 多尖锐的和有意义的问题。

策展人所提出的"见所未见",即是对于视觉未见之物在思维和精神上的所见。这

种置身于感官视觉之外的所见正是区分审美欣赏与视觉观看行为的关键内容。对于 一个布满灰尘的书本的观看,并不异于我们日常生活中对于任何事物的观看行为, 在这种情况下, 观看只是一种生存状态下实用性的信息获取行为, 在视觉之下对于 所观事物的分析, 例如材质、大小、距离以及实用功能的直觉判断, 也都只是基础 而实用的。这种观看行为是朴素的并且很难和艺术以及审美产生联系。然而在艺术 家通过作品形式将观众的观看对象从书本本身转移为漫长的时间积累的时候,这种 观看行为就变质成为了一种审美欣赏。"见所未见"所强调的并非未见,而是对于 观看对象由具象向抽象的转移,也就是由感官的所见向思想的所见的转移。在这样 的情况下, 视觉感官的隔断也就成为了这种转移的动力。 展览中对视觉的隔断人为 地将我们平时的审美观看分割为了视觉和思想两个方面, 而在对传统作品的欣赏中, 这二者往往是合二为一的, "见所未见"突出了思想的方面, 让我们对审美欣赏中 被其所遮蔽的视觉观看和被其所彰显的思想理解都有了更加深入的思考。我们对于 艺术品的审美欣赏,似乎从来都不是局限于视觉的层面;我们对于艺术品的追求, 绝对不仅仅是对感官美感的追求。我们在观看艺术品时,更多的是在阅读,或者说 通过思想和想象力去观看视觉感官背后的"未见"。正是这一层面的所见构成了我 们审美活动的主体。那么视觉感官和思想理解的界限在什么位置? 艺术品应当在二 者中取得怎么样的一种平衡才能被称之为佳作? 怎么样的视觉感官能够更好地激 发观众的思想和想象力? 什么样的思想和想象力能够进而丰富和完善视觉的感官体 验? 这是策展人在展览前留给展览和观众去解答的问题。

在对于视觉感官进行隔断的同时,主题展策展人在"见所未见"提出了另一个问题: 既然我们对于艺术品的审美欣赏首先依托的是视觉感官,既然我们需要视觉的可见来作为指向精神的所见的路标,那么视觉感官所具有的局限性和欺骗性,是否会将我们的思想和想象力引导至错误的方向? 在参展的很多作品中,都表现了视觉的这种局限。人类的视觉能力相对于其所认知的范围而言已经显得极端的贫乏,这种贫乏一方面表现在目力所及的空间距离和范围上,这种限定导致很多的视觉内容我们必须通过媒介才能看到,而经由媒介所看到的内容却已经经过了人为的挑选和限定。另一方面,我们的视觉关注在时间上也是有限的,太过缓慢的过程会被我们误视为静止,太过迅捷的过程会使我们无法看清。所以无论是缓慢地碰撞在一起的汽车,还是子弹击穿苹果的画面都是我们天然的视觉条件所无法捕捉的内容。这种在时间和空间上的局限,使得通过视觉所造成的欺骗十分得轻易,通过图像再现的那些美

国偏僻沙漠中的军事基地是否是真实存在的,还是只是艺术家为了表现政治阴谋而刻意制造的影像?子弹击穿物体的过程是否真的如此,还是人为制造出的假象?这种疑虑最终会导致一种对所有视觉感官所接收到的信息的质疑。它是否最终会颠覆我们对于图像的信任?艺术在真实之外是否能够继续探知真理?既然一切都依靠于视觉,那么当视觉被左右的时候,我们将如何?而这些通过有限的视觉来引导想象力的作品是否会扩大或者缩小视觉艺术的极致与边界?

在对于视觉感官探索与追问的同时,"见所未见"也利用广东美术馆的多个展览场地,表现出了对于当代美术馆自身问题的关注。 "见所未见"突破了以往的呈现模式,将同一主题的艺术作品根据其最佳的展示方式与效果分批在不同的展示空间中展出。不同于以平行展形式出现的多场馆展示,如何选择场馆以及分配不同场馆的作品并使之相互联系,都必须建立在本次的学术主题和整个三年展的策展逻辑之上。解决这一问题的前提在于首先要理解美术馆在当下的概念,这不仅包括美术馆在形成之初所具有的作用以及意义,同时也包括美术馆在应对当下层出不穷、变动不居的艺术形式时不断改变的自身形态,以及在面对新的社会文化与城市经济体制下不断更新的概念内涵。这也是第四届广州三年展中我们所致力于的学术论题,回到美术馆自身这一问题是主题展学术论点的又一个基点,让美术馆由传统的模式理念向当代模式转换,并尝试使美术馆适应于当下的政治、社会、历史和美学要求。美术馆最大的性能在于处理审美与公共性的关系。而这与美术馆的物理属性即建筑本身的实用功能,以及它的精神属性即建筑本身生成的于外界的关系相关。在此基础上,需要力图解决两个问题:如何打破学科边界,建构多义性的展示空间;以及如何由展示艺术品为主体的美术馆向公众参与为主体的体验美术馆转化。

针对前者,展览选择了广州大剧院作为除广东美术馆外的第一场馆。剧院与美术馆具有不同的职能作用。两者致力于展示不同存在方式、感知方式、创作方式的艺术形态。展览中将空间艺术与时空艺术,视觉艺术与视听艺术,造型艺术与表演艺术进行了有机的结合与穿插。而选择正佳广场则是出于对公众参与审美形式的实验。正佳广场作为既定的公共空间,艺术品对它的介入使得观看的过程以公众的需要和期待为中心展开。由于展示空间形态在概念上的转变,公众可以自觉主动地接近和体验那些起着构成文化、铸造记忆和寻根作用的艺术符号,并使公众通过与展品的互动,在知识、信仰、文化身份等诸多方面逐渐形成主动参与的习惯。就如同 20 世

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纪 90 年代以后,我们可以看到一些户外装置或者行为艺术直接进入城镇的街道或者人们生活的公共空间。此举不仅使艺术进入了日常的生活空间,也逐渐变成了人与人、人与社会的互动媒介。²

馆外的展览场所,不是一个简单的选择意向,而是一系列的综合考虑过程。除了学术主题上的考虑,也要衡量什么样的场地可以弥补美术馆自身在硬件设施上的弱点。衡量所选场地是否满足展览本身的条件;衡量是否适合相关作品的创作展示与专业化的策展,从而使展示方式更加多样化,使各种社会资源为艺术所用,使审美文化得以广泛流通,最终使展览可以得到完整的体现。这既是当代艺术如何由单一空间走向多元开放空间形态的一次可贵探索,也是开启展览学科跨界,资源互补,空间互融的新篇章。美术馆跨越了既定的空间限制,由直白的场所名称,变成一个具有引申解释的文化代名词。但是,我们预设的这些文化设想与展示空间究竟可以给观众带来什么?艺术学科的跨界对各艺术形态本身的定义是会拓宽各自的边界还是会模糊两者的界限?艺术融入公共空间,走向大众它会具有怎样新的价值?若艺术不再与生活、商业有所界别,那艺术的精神性与欣赏性是否也因此失去了意义?这种模式同样带来了许多值得进一步追问的内容。

"见所未见"作为第四届广州三年展的核心组成部分,一方面保持了本届三年展对核心概念和命题关注与探索,另一方面又以富有创造力的方法论和关注点,对这些问题保持了进一步地、锲而不舍地追问和怀疑。虽然它最终很可能无法提供解答,并且其最终的目的也并不在于寻求答案。然而这种对于问题的发现和探索并且进行执著的追问的努力本身,就是第四届广州三年展最为核心的内容,也是在这一系列可见的展览中所隐藏着的未见。

注释

- 1 《当代西方最新文论教程》,王岳川著,复旦大学出版社,第485页。
- 2 《艺术介入空间》,【法】卡特琳·格鲁著,姚梦吟译,广西师范大学出版社,第7页。

Preface

Visual Perception and Visual Art: a Further Exploration of the Meta-Question

LUO YIPING

The Fourth Guangzhou Triennial is an exhibition grounded in research. From the start, it has focused on an exploration of and reflection upon the 'metaquestion' concerning the very nature of the museum and of art per se. The investigation of such a central concept takes the Guangzhou Triennial beyond the traditional presentation of art, and expands its scope to encompass a much broader undertaking: research. This is not a task guided by empty, theory-laden words buried in the depths of the library; it is a discussion conducted in the spirit of artistic practice, guided by a specific, realistic exhibition model.

The opening show of the Triennial first set out the focus, pulling the discussion of primary concern away from numerous possible forms of contemporary art and returning it to the nature of art itself and to the function and form of the museum - with a proposition titled "Meta-Question - Back to the Museum Per Se". This show took the Guangdong Museum of Art's renovation and expansion as an opportunity to re-examine and reflect upon central questions regarding the role of art and the function of the art gallery, interrogating the essential properties and relevant scope of an art museum and of contemporary art on both ideational and theoretical levels. The projects that have followed out of this initial interrogation have served both to concretely realize its intention and further deepen its inquiry. The Triennial's first project exhibition, "De-Fascinating the Chinese Imagination", continued the discussion, speaking mainly of capitalization and marketization, their intrusion into contemporary art, and the way in which their accompanying ideologies restrict individual artistic creation. The second project exhibition, "The Third Nature: Chinese Reconstruction" focused more on cultural theories of ecology, underscoring the question "where humans will go?" from a survival perspective in view of our spiritual history. The third project exhibition, "Dimensions - Analysis of Three Art Cases", was a glimpse, through case-by-case analysis, into the individuality embodied by different universal artistic phenomena. Three artists deconstructed and broke through traditional values and statutes of ink painting, forging a new dimension of ink expression suited to their current cultural context. This so-called 'dimension' was a relative concept - its precise indicators not born out of its isolation, but rather existing in relation to its surrounding context. Whether a work of art is 'good' or 'bad' cannot depend on its individual beauty in a vacuum; the answer is dependent upon its role

and significance within the greater architecture of art history. And taking this further, the Triennial theme exhibition's *Birmingham Billboard Project* in Birmingham, UK extends the space of the art museum into the public realm, initiating a discussion of art's boundaries, its relationship to the public and to everyday life. The Triennial's theme exhibition, following the conclusion of its project exhibitions, takes their respective discussions – which have hovered between art and society, art and nature, art and art discourse, and art and public life – and pulls them back into the midst of an exploration of art itself, one that begins at the most basic level of visual art – that is, the sense of sight itself – probing once again that meta-question: what truly are these things we call contemporary art, the art exhibition, the museum?

Curators Jiang Jiehong and Jonathan Watkins have established here a new model for investigation, establishing a research methodology built around the notion of "seeing the unseen." Distinct from previous, traditional theme exhibitions, this exhibition operates by a "practice-led" strategy, a conception with strongly positivistic undertones, placing the exhibition within a research framework built on the foundation of collected experimental data. The display of works is no longer what informs the ultimate shape of the exhibition, nor is it the final goal; it is only the beginning, prompting the exhibition's investigation. First, it is the delimitation of a scope of study, a setting of research boundaries through the selection of works; next, it is an observation of the behavior of the audience, the impact of the exhibition, and the influence of the works and of other research subjects; next, it is the collection of raw data with the aim of obtaining new knowledge, of the kind never before unearthed by an exhibition nor perhaps previously imagined possible at all; and lastly, it is taking the data to establish a new point of view, or even a new theoretical framework. This exhibition model corresponds to the current Triennial's attempts to access the meta-question by visual means, and further rises to meet the goal of a speculative, metaphysical theoretical discussion. From this vantage point, The Unseen is most like a process of experimentation and of data collection; it is a full excavation of the innermost content of these works on both a visual level and a level beyond the reaches of sight. At the same time, through its unique methodology, the exhibition creates and disseminates a message - originating from the visual images of the exhibition - that would itself be unrenderable through theory or text, and in so doing dispels some of the theoretical

abstraction, bringing the Triennial's theoretical explorations back to earth and grounding them in a more practical substance: each word speaking once again to a tangible counterpart.

In their exhibition The Unseen, the curators seem to have simply added a variable quantity on top of 'artwork' and 'art exhibition' in their traditional senses: namely, an obstruction of sight. This kind of obstruction in fact brings with it an extremely large risk, resulting as it does in a direct questioning and suspicion with regard to the defined domain contained by the concept of 'art'. Our myriad definitions of art all seem to have been overlooking one of its most fundamental points of origin: 'the visible'. When this point of origin is cut out, can art still survive? Is a work of art that cannot be seen still a work of art? Is an artwork's status as 'art' dependent upon its visibility? Choosing to ask a question much like "who created the Creator?", The Unseen takes the focus away from the "what is art?" problem and pushes it towards the "what is visibility?" problem, namely, how do we define the scope of what is truly 'visible'? Is it just about the physiological sense of sight? Or does it also take into account those 'visions' of the intellectual or spiritual nature? For instance, is imagination something we can see? Would an observation of objects of the imagination be sufficient to replace an observation of objects presented to us by our ocular visual experience? Before seeing the exhibition there certainly will be no way for us to answer these questions, and even afterwards all we will be left with will, most likely, still be a few rough guesses and vague possibilities. But the important thing is that through highlighting both the visible and the invisible, through challenging the relationship between art and visual sense, The Unseen has already revived the meta-question - with which, as the theme exhibition of the Fourth Guangzhou Triennial, it is most directly concerned. Driven forward by this explorative purpose, the exhibition does not rashly cut off all possibilities of seeing - on the contrary, each work has its visible aspects. The difference is that these works' visible aspects are not what constitute their true content. They are merely signposts, pointing the audience in the direction of the huge valley of the invisible, lying just beyond. Making known, through this theme, their own definition of art, the curators turn to the specific works themselves, engaging in further, more detailed questions concerning the relationship between visual sense and aesthetic appreciation, the limitations and deceptiveness of sight, and their impact on

our understanding of art: presenting the more pointed, directly meaningful questions that arise out of their 'practice-led' principle.

"The unseen," an idea proposed by curator Jiang Jiehong, refers to the act of seeing, on an intellectual and spiritual level, that which the eyes themselves cannot physically see. This sort of vision, residing outside sight, can be identified as part of the key distinction between aesthetic appreciation and the activity of sheer visual observation. The experience of reading an old, dustcovered book is in many ways no different from the experience of observing anything else we come across in our lives; seen in this light, the act of viewing is just the practical, survival-oriented act of data collection. Sub-visual analyses of the things we observe - direct judgments by which we determine their comprising materials, their size, how far away they are, their applicable uses - are all, again, just basic, practical operations. Viewing behavior like this is disconnected from art and aesthetics. But when the artist, through the form of his or her work, shifts the subject of audience observation from the concrete object of the book itself to the slow accumulation of time around and within it, the nature of 'viewing' instantly undergoes fundamental change. It becomes an aesthetic appreciation and apprehension. The Unseen does not in fact emphasize what is invisible, but rather stresses the conversion of the visible subject from representational to abstract: a shift from what the senses see to what the mind sees. With this exhibition, the obstruction of sight becomes the very driving force behind this shift; built-in barriers to vision serve as artificially imposed fragmentations of our aesthetic observational experience into its two components: the visual and the ideational. In the traditional appreciation of art these two are typically merged into one, but The Unseen accentuates the latter, making us consider in greater depth the sort of visual observation that aesthetic pleasure obscures on the one hand, and the sort of intellectual understanding that it puts on full display on the other hand. Our aesthetic appreciation of art seems never to remain on just the visual level; our pursuit of 'the art work' is not by any means a pursuit only of sensory beauty. When we observe a work of art, we are not just observing, we are also, and more so, reading; that is to say we are using our minds and our imaginative powers to intuit that "unseen" which escapes our sense of sight. It is precisely this level of the 'visible' that pulls in our aesthetic engagement. Given this, where lies the boundary between visual sense and intellectual understanding? What

kind of balance should a work of art achieve between the two, if it is to be considered a true masterpiece? What kind of visual experience can most successfully stimulate thought and imagination, and what sort of thought and imagination can most successfully enrich and perfect visual experience? These are problems that the curators have left for the audience, and for the exhibition itself, to work out.

At the same time as they obstruct sight, the curators of The Unseen also propose another question: seeing as, in appreciating art work from an aesthetic standpoint, we primarily rely on our sense of sight, and given that this same sense provides us with road signs on the path to spiritual apprehension, might the limited and deceptive nature of sight have the potential to lead our thoughts and imaginations astray? Many of the exhibition's participating works touch upon this particular shortcoming of sight. The range of what humans are actually able to see is extremely poor relative to the scope of what they are able to cognize. On the one hand, this poverty of sight refers to the limited breadth, depth, and distance over which the eye can travel - a limitation that results in our reliance on media to give us access to otherwise unreachable visual content; thus the content we view through these media has already been subject to an artificial selection and qualification. On the other hand, our sense of sight is temporally restricted as well. A process that moves to slowly will be mistaken take for complete stillness, and a process that occurs too quickly will be missed entirely. Whether it is two cars in slow collision or the image of a bullet shooting through an apple, it is all content that our natural vision lacks the capacity to capture. These spatial and temporal handicaps make visual deception extremely easy; do those military bases in the remote American desert, reproduced through images, truly exist? Or does the artist deliberately fabricate them as an expression of political intrigue? Does a bullet truly pierce through an object in that way, or is it a manufactured illusion? The continued accumulation of such doubt could result in the questioning of visual information altogether; would this be the ultimate subversion of our trust in images? Could art still continue to uncover truth from outside the truth? As everything is so dependent on sight, if this sense is unceasingly buffeted about, then what are we to do? And these works that limit vision in order to call upon imagination: will they widen or narrow visual art's boundaries?

The Unseen makes use of several of the Guangdong Museum of Art's exhibition spaces in addressing the question of the art museum itself, thereby breaking away from oft employed models of presentation and displaying artworks of the same theme in different exhibition spaces, each according to their own individual strongpoints. Unlike other multi-venue exhibitions, for this exhibition the problem of how to choose separate venues and distribute artworks among them while simultaneously maintaining their shared connection was compounded by the challenge of conforming to the theme exhibition's academic focus, as well as to the curatorial logic of the Triennial at large. The precondition for finding a solution to this problem was an understanding of the concept behind the museum itself, with regard not only to its originally intended role and significance, but also to its constantly transforming status in the face of ever-changing art forms, as well as its constantly renewing central principles in confrontation with a new society, a new culture, and a new urban economy. This moves into a broader academic discussion, one to which the entire Fourth Guangzhou Triennial is devoted: the questions inherent in the issue of returning 'to the museum itself', as the art museum transitions from the principles of a traditional museum model to those of a contemporary model in its attempt to adapt to the political, social, historical, and aesthetic demands of our times. The museum fulfills its highest function when it deals with the relationship between the aesthetic and the public, a task which in turn relates to the interaction between the museum's physical properties - namely the practical functionality of its architecture and its spiritual properties - namely its the relationship to the outside world as articulated by its structure. On this basis, there are two more problems which require solving: how to break disciplinary boundaries, constructing a truly polysemous exhibition space, and how - as a museum whose previous primary focus has been only the presentation of art - to shift focus to audience participation and experience.

In approaching the former challenge, the exhibition has chosen the Guangzhou Opera House as its first venue outside of the Museum. The Opera House and the Museum serve in different roles, but both are devoted to the presentation of art forms embodying various modes of existence, perception, and creation, as the over-arching exhibition organically combines and interperses spatial and temporal arts; visual and audio-visual arts; and plastic