

## **Art Basel in Basel 2018**

**Date | 2018.6.14 - 17**

**Galleries | S24**

**INGA SVALA THORSOTTIR & WU SHANZHUAN**

**Unlimited | U9**

**Yu Hong, *Old Man Yu Gong is Still Moving Away Mountains***

For Art Basel 2018 Galleries sector, Long March Space presents a solo exhibition surveying conceptual works by the collective of Inga SvalaThorsdottir& Wu Shanzhuanspaning from the 1980s to the present. They characterised their practice as above all else oriented towards altering how people think. The booth of Long March Space provides a guide to the line age of selected concepts that have sprung out of their varied work. At the core of their practice the collective asks: is art a field capable of democratizing all things, and how do these concepts generate forms?

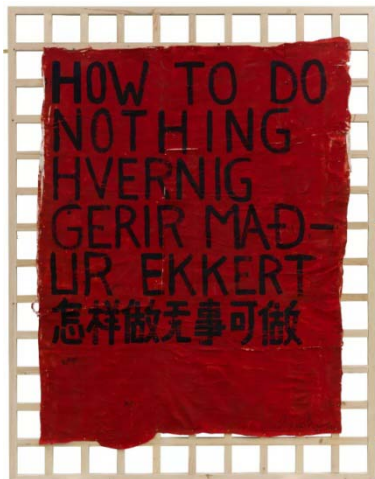
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## Red Humour / Red Humour International



Wu Shanzhuan

*How to Do Nothing*

1990-1991

Acrylic on canvas

With wooden frame 252 x 195 cm



Wu Shanzhuan

*Red Humour Supermarket 1991*

Acrylic on photo collage

18 x 25 cm

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According to Wu the Cultural Revolution "utilised the colour red more than any other movement in human history." In works dealing with the color, he and Thorsdottir deconstruct its political aestheticization. While the "Red Humour" projects he made in the 1980s as a pioneer of Chinese conceptual art exaggerated to an absurd level Cultural Revolution propaganda, his approach shifted after coming to Iceland in 1990. Identifying supermarkets as temples of consumerism, through looking at their flashy merchandise Wu realized Communistred could exist without ideological significance, as one color among many. In two photo collages titled *Red Humour Supermarket* (1990-1991), Wu photographed supermarket aisles, painted in red over all the goods, and stamped the composition with the seal of "Red Humour International", merging strands of implied and overt social control.



Wu Shanzhuan

*A CROSS A PLUS*, 1990-1991

Wooden

31 x 34 x 16cm

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*A Cross A Plus* (1990-1991), produced in Iceland as part of the series "Wu's Things", also stems from Wu's discovery of the supermarket, playfully scrubbing off layers of meaning as barcodes match the four cardinal directions and the crucifix becomes equal parts mathematical operator and architectural element. Facing customs and logistics obstacles shipping art, Wu conceived of *The Price of Art from the International Red Humour* (1990-1991), a painting listing weights and dimensions in English, Chinese, and Icelandic, presenting "art" and "red" as normal entities without added symbolic value. Meanwhile Thorsdottir and Wu's sketch *75% Red, 20% Black, 5% White* (1991-1995) uses an approach analogous to KP Brehmer's statistical paintings to analyze red and remove its special status.

## A Mirror



Inga Svala Thorsdottir

*A Mirror*, 1993

Pulverized mirror, glass bottle

Artwork: 64 x 9 x 12.5 cm

Plinth: 72 x 12 x 6cm

One of the conceptual cornerstones for the project of "Thing's Right(s)" is Thorsdottir's practice of pulverization, showcased here in her 1993 piece *A Mirror*. The artistic series entitled "Thor's Daughter's Pulverization Service", a iconic

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mimicry of economic and artist services. By grinding various things down to powder through exhaustive work, and then packaging and labeling the results, Thorsdottir's gesture is one that renders the readymades into unreadymades, idiosyncratically counterpointing Duchampian "golden touch".

Specifically, the powder here serves as "proof of work" for the emancipation of things, with the pulverized powder becoming a "signified vacuum" for the word "Mirror". The pulverization therefore critically investigates art history's valorization of the visual, and the role of labour in society. Or, as art critic Boris Groys has characterized in "Particular Cases", in which he reads Malevich's view to the museum with Thorsdottir's work comparatively: "it is the reduction to dust (or pulverization) of the old things along with the destruction of their exchange value that opens the way for new things to have a new use value."

## Vege-Pleasure



*Wu Shanzhuan BUT STILL RED, Red Humour International in collaboration with Inga Svala Thorsdottir, Thor's Daughter's Pulverization Service*

Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China, 2008

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Inga Svava Thorsdottir & Wu Shanzhuan

*The Making of Vege-pleasure* 1996-1998

Video, Edition of 5

17'37"

The "Vege-Pleasure" series returns to the supermarket as a contemporary Garden of Eden of abundance. In 1996 in Hamburg Thorsdottir and Wu selected fruits and vegetables, then arranged and sketched them in Dionysian scenes of ripe decay and coupling. By diverting vegetables from their intended purpose as food and letting their natural biological cycle progress, they are granted a form of autonomy. In the delicate drawings on display the sexual overtones of the decaying vegetables are contrasted with the seductive consumerism of the supermarket, positioned as the true temptation. The video piece *The Making of Vege-Pleasure* (1996-1998) shows the artists buying and preparing their materials, while running text explains their process and aims, such as to depict "the diversity of sex, life, and death."

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## Today No Water



*Today No Water, 1986*

Installation, poster colour and ink on rice paper

Institute for Mass Culture, Zhoushan

Wu's understanding of language was shaped by his youth in China, where he discovered that through overuse it could become filled with "deficit characters" – text disconnected from reality and its intended meaning. This concept is explored through the phrase "Today No Water", translated from the Chinese pronouncement that authorities would make in the 1980s to announce that water services would be halted, without giving justification or an explanation why. Turning the spotlight back on to a phrase that would have been accepted without question, Wu emphasizes how little information the words actually transmit, and language's reliance on the mechanics of power.

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Wu Shanzhuan

*Today No Water* 15/28, 2015

Acrylic marker on canvas

200 x 300 cm

The *Today No Water* paintings (2006 and 2015) began in Wu's sketchbooks as plans for a theatrical performance where the plot would skew conventional cause and effect. Animals, machinery and humans dot the images, creating a discursive visual diary of everyday life. These works are connected at their core to Wu's novel of the same name (written 1985-1998, published 2008), conceived as a "cargo container text" for words reflecting the social tumult, accelerated market development, and information overload of post-Mao China.

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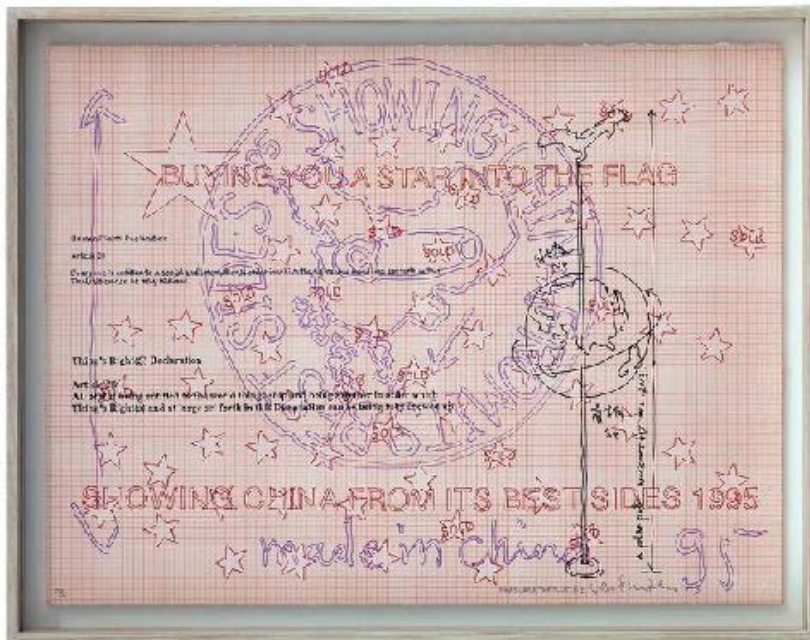
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## Thing's Right(s)



Inga Svala Thorsdottir & Wu Shanzhuan

*Thing's Right(s) Printed 2013 Thing's Right(s) Declaration, Article 28*

2013, Ed. 5/6

Lithography, screen print on Stonehenge paper

55.5 x 73 cm

The "Thing's Right(s)" series, originally formulated in the duo's manifestos to *Thing's Right(s) Declaration* in 1995, takes its antecedent from the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, revising it as raw material to find a means for a higher level of emancipation. In *Thing's Right(s) Article 28*, the declaration points with sad irony to how frequently human rights are flouted, while supplemental text and sketches on "Showing China from its best sides" bringing commerce and geopolitics into the frame. Thorsdottir and Wu call for all things to be as "special" as aestheticized art-objects, while also retaining their innate use value, allowing for every thing (and individual) to freely exist in its own unique state. The aim is for each thing to

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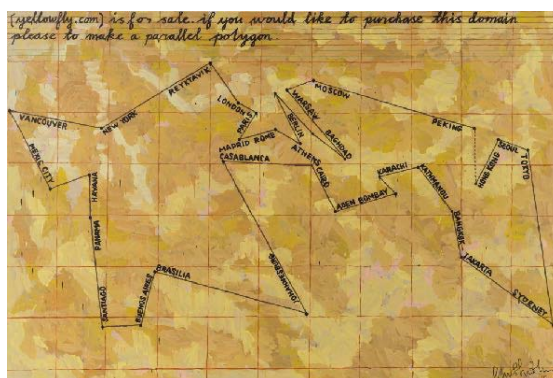
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"become an extra" – for each thing to be granted additional background information and symbolic value. In these conditions, "with the extra position, the right(s) of things appears".

## Yellow Flight



Wu Shanzhuan

*Yellow Fly* 1995, 2015

Acrylic on canvas

300 x 200 cm

Wu Shanzhuan's painting *Yellow Fly* 1995 (2015) playfully inverts international systems and symbolic codes by imagining a yearlong journey from Beijing to Hong Kong through the most convoluted route possible, exploiting the pre-1997 political status of Hong Kong to transform a would-be short trip into an extended odyssey of international transfers, delaying the destination in order to use these visa-frees transit zones as an arena to mediate on identity.

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## Other works



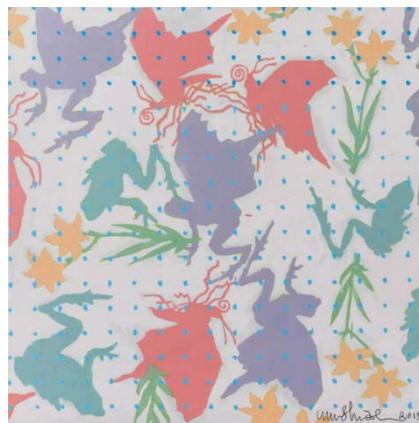
Wu Shanzhuan

*When the Flame Thrower Becomes Pattern*

2016

Acrylic on canvas

135 x 215 cm



Wu Shanzhuan

*Butterfrog for Children's Underwear*

2015

Acrylic on canvas

168 x 168 cm

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In works featured in the booth, the artists take these symbols and then construct new forms out of them, whether the skeletal cube of *Perimeter Hollowed – The Perfect Brackets* (2017), the elegant outlines of *Circle Vibration (The Big Brackets)* (2016), or the interlocking wooden panels of the "Seven in One" series (2017) where the shape "Little Fat Flesh" is tilted diagonally.

In the aluminum *Beam* (2018), the perfect brackets become a solid architectural element, a building block for new knowledge. In a cast iron version the piece was also featured in *CAUSE AND EXAMPLES PROJECTED FROM IT*, their 2017 solo exhibition at Long March Space.

The "perfect brackets" lie at the center of Inga Svala Thorsdottir and Wu Shanzhuan's hermetic personal language of symbols, providing the logo for "Thing's Right(s)". Crossed over each other, the twin parentheses create a new independent shape where linguistic content would usually be placed. A sense of meaning and identity is restored to the object itself, rather than any external symbolism assigned to it. This visual concept has subsequently been expanded upon through the "Kuo Xuan" which extends the perfect bracket through spirals to infinity, and was first shown at an exhibition of the same name at Long March Space in 2011, and the "Little Fat Flesh", (2012) which is the inverse of the area covered by the brackets.

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Inga Svala Thorsdottir & Wu Shanzhuan

## About the artists

Thorsdottir and Wu have been working and exhibiting collaboratively since 1991 and both currently live and work in Hamburg, Shanghai, and Iceland.

Inga Svala Thorsdottir (b.1966) was born in Iceland. In 1991, she graduated from the Painting Department of the Icelandic School of Arts and Crafts and Hochschule für bildende Künste in 1995. She also founded Thor's Daughter's Pulverization Service in 1993 and BORG in 1999.

Wu Shanzhuan (b.1960) was born in Zhoushan, China. He graduated from the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Art in 1986 and Hochschule für bildende Künste in 1995. He founded Red Humour in 1985 and Red Humour International in 1990. He also was featured in the pioneering 1989 "China/Avant-Garde Exhibition" in Beijing.

## Exhibition History / Selected Solo Exhibitions

2018 *Quote! Quote! Quote!*, Hanart TZ, Hong Kong

2017 *Cause and Examples Projected from It*, Long March Space, Beijing, China

2015 *Circles Vibration – Bracket Bridge*, Hanart TZ, Hong Kong

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2014 *The Printer / The Paper / The Layer / The Thing's Right(s) / The Little Fat Flesh*, Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore

2013 *What A Form: A Reportage*, OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Shenzhen, China

2013 *Arctic Fox Arc*, Temperature War, Large Collage, Hanart TZ, Hong Kong

2011 *Kuo Xuan*, Long March Space, Beijing, China

### **Exhibition History / Selected Group Exhibitions**

2017 *Art and China After 1989: Theatre of the World*, Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA

2014 *Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

2014 *Tales from the Taiping Era*, Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing, China

2014 *Íslensk Samtíðarportrett*, Akureyri Art Museum, Akureyri, Iceland.

2014 *Taipei Biennial*, Taipei, Taiwan

2012 *Surplus Authors*, Witte de With, Rotterdam, Netherlands

2011 *Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art*, Göteborg, Sweden

1989 *China/Avant-Garde'89*, National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China

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