

Digital and Socio-Political — Tan's Refractive Brain Therapy

数码艺术和社会政治——谭力勤的“折射与洗脑”

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Monumental brains with human facial features confront visitors to Old City's Dalet Art Gallery, and they don't look happy. Some are screaming, some are dormant, others are immersed in tanks of water; all are rusting. These 3D-digital animations on LCD screens, laser prints on metal, and mixed-media installations by LiQin Tan are the latest in his series of computer art that makes a statement about the human spirit, its deterioration, and its abuse by authority.

Stylistically, the works are so visually convincing, three-dimensional, and tactile that it takes a few moments to realize that they are not actual enlarged photographs. How could they be, since we all know that brains don't have faces, and organic matter doesn't rust? Yet they are treated with such a precise rendering of detail and texture, in such a totally matter-of-fact and descriptive manner, that they convince us for a split second of their reality. The startling effect of these partly real, largely imagined anthropomorphic images creates a haunting and evocative mood that disturbs and entices the viewer to ponder the deeper meaning of LiQin Tan's virtual reality.

Some explanation is provided by the exhibition's title, Refractive Brain Therapy. Combined with his cutting-edge technology and neo-surrealist style, Li incorporates an important message into his post-modern art, with roots in his native Chinese culture. The artist notes that in Chinese ideology, the word "refractive" holds a dual meaning. It not only refers, as in the Western definition, to the natural phenomenon in physics of the bending of a wave, such as a light or sound, as it passes from one medium to another of a different density, but also to the psycho-physical practices of water therapy, water torture, and brainwashing. Thus "refractivity" operates on two levels: as a visual illusion; and as a social issue.

Consequently, some of Li's prints are partially submerged in water-filled vats of tempered glass. As light waves pass from the gallery's spotlights, through the air, and ultimately through the glass and water of the art installation, gallery-goers observe the optical illusion of the morphing of the virtual brain images. This triggers thoughts of the psychological and physiological effects that water

therapies have on the human psyche—the soothing mood of a steam bath or jacuzzi, the damage done by the "Chinese water torture" and brainwashing (and, we might add, water-boarding). The deterioration is made clear by the artist in his brains' telling physiognomic expressions and metaphorical oxidation.

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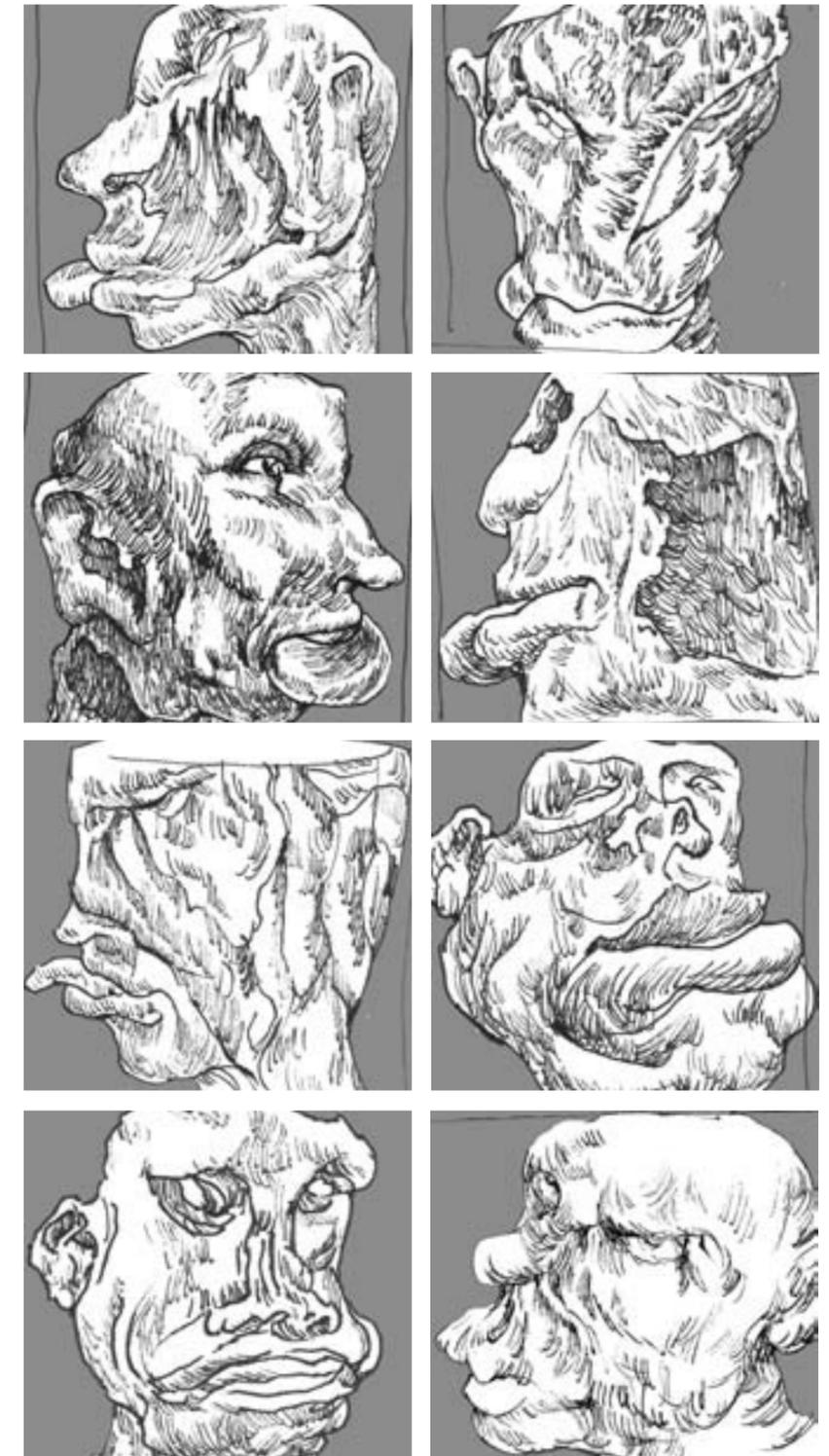
在费城老街区靶雷特画廊, 面对络绎不绝的观众, 力勤创作的数码丰硕大脑与人类面孔作品看起来并不快乐。他们一些尖叫, 一些处于休眠状态, 另一些则沉浸在钢玻璃水缸中, 全都生锈。三维动画透视液晶屏、激光打印於金属表层以及各种混合媒介装置手法构成了力勤最新电脑美术系列的新格局, 作品浸透并折射出对人类精神, 社会恶化和权力滥用的一种视觉抨击。

作品风格很有视觉说服力, 其超级真实的立体感与触感, 使大家要好几分钟才能意识到这不是放大的照片, 因大脑中不存在人体和脸孔, 有机体不可能生锈。但这种精确细微的纹理渲染和完全不顾现实的描绘手法, 还是会令你产生片刻客观物体的幻觉。因为这种令人惊讶的效果和大型拟人图像, 而创造了一种令人困扰而回味的艺术环境, 引诱和强制观众去思考力勤虚拟现实中的深刻含义。

展览的标题“折射与洗脑”已提供了一些解释。力勤采用数码尖端技术、新超级现实主义风格和中国文化相结合的手法, 告之大家他的艺术进入后现代主义。力勤指出, 在中国思想中, “折射”一词有着双重含义, 它不仅是指西方定义中的光、声音中弯曲波的物质自然现象——从一介质传递到另一不同密度的物体; 更重要的是, 它意指一种社会深层现象的揭发, 并与心理治疗、水疗和洗脑等相结合。因此, “折射”有二个层次含义: 视觉中的错觉, 社会问题的真实。

为此, 谭的部分数码作品淹没在装满水的大型钢化玻璃缸中, 由于光波通过画廊的射灯, 通过空气, 并最终通过玻璃和水的装置艺术, 观众会跟随虚拟大脑的图像变形而产生一种光学错觉。这种心理和生理上触想激发了“水”对人类心灵的干扰与医治作用, 如: 一种蒸气浴、按摩后的舒缓放松, 或者一种中国式“水刑”和“洗脑”后的痛苦和盲目。在大脑艺术作品中, 力勤对其心理信念上的伤害和物质氧化后的腐朽, 都有其明确的阐述和规定。

2011年2月于费城



Head Sketches, 构思草稿
3" x 2.5" (8 cm x 6.5 cm) 2010-11