

# Digitally Bloodless – The Work of Li Qin Tan

**Curator:** Ellen Pearlman  
Beijing, August, 2009

Li Qin Tan's work is best approached on three levels. The first is its technical intricacy. The second is the boldness and difficulty of implementation. The third is its conceptual depth.

On a technical level, the 3D and animation softwares Tan uses are *Softimage|XSI*, *Maya*, and *ZBrush* with post-production work executed in *Adobe AfterEffects*, *Combustion*, *Photoshop/CS*, and *Premiere/Pro*. He creates his own unique special effects with these softwares emulating the decaying effects of rust, and the peculiar swirl patterns attained by knotty wood burl caused by a tree's environmental stress and degradation. A special *HP Scitex P2700* printer was used to navigate the thick, rigid areas and uneven layers of the pitted metal picture surface by calibrating specialized media sensors. The timing for the micro millimeter differences when layering ink over the planar depth must be impeccable in order for the image to develop and cohere correctly.

The multi panel series of six screens, "Lava Body" uses an advanced Matrox TripleHead2Go video splitter to simulate animated lava flow that moves from one screen to the next. In order to render or process such images, up to 100 computers were put together in what is commonly referred to as a render farm, or cluster of computers. In a render farm each frame is calculated individually. The processors upload the source material such as models and textures and send out the finished image to a file which is then displayed in a mesmerizing loop. For the large metal prints in "Digitally Bloodless" between 15 and 20 computers were used to render each individual still image.

The difficulty and boldness of implementation lies in the complexity of designing, then coding a 2D image into a 3D image, capturing and outputting it on a 2D surface and in some cases such as the print series "Digital Primitive" throwing a knife directly into its surface to reenact or suggest its inherent 3D, sculptural nature. Or it is the audacity to put a live time rolling grind stone that changes screen images underneath its trajectory helped along by a participating viewer. It also includes the idea to project directly upon rawhide skin, one of the most indigenous forms of protection and utility.

But it is in concept that Tan's oeuvre truly breaks new ground. He thinks about the relationship of this highly technical artistic medium to our place as human beings in this first decade of the quickly growing technologically literate 21<sup>st</sup> century. Not so long ago, at least in many temperate climates we were wrapped in crude furs and skins and lived in caves, (inserted a comma) a

condition though rare, can still be found in the most remote areas of the planet. This approach transcends national boundaries or stylistic devices.

One of the most troubling aspects of computer art is the conceptual basis upon which the images are imagined, meaning the trajectory and ideological framework of the artist. Much of this complex work dwells on stereotyped sexual imagery, simplistic urges to wage war and elaborate cartoon fantasies. Tan has more sophisticated training than that, both in Western figurative painting as well as traditional Chinese brush and ink techniques. In "Grindstone" he draws upon his experiences as a child during the Cultural Revolution when he was forced to grind husks of grain. He takes simple visual representations that can be understood cross culturally – the burl designs in wood, the back of a head, molten lava, the female form, and a grindstone, painstakingly recreating them using elemental surfaces. He considers the natural "Five Elements" of Water, Metal, Fire, Wood and Earth as guiding principles taken directly from Taoism and the I Ching, or Book of Changes, highlighting the inherent tensions between technology and nature.

In the sculptural installation "Grindstone" a user driven interactive installation, he bases his experiences as a boy sent to the countryside to grind down husk from kernel. Tan re-enacts the experience using a traditional grindstone as a sculptural device that (deleted comma) when set in motion rolls over embedded video monitors producing changes in the shifting images underneath.

This is not just sleight of hand. It is a powerful discussion on the human capacity for metamorphosis and transformation, and the ability of the individual to take a representation and cohere it into another form.

This is a viewpoint of medium as a shape shifter. Shape shifting is what native indigenous individuals did when speaking with their gods by taking on the appearance or characteristics of their totem. These images are not part of Tan's direct past, and are borrowed, or appropriated for his purposes. However, since the photographic work of Andy Warhol, Richard Prince and Barbara Kruger, we are in the age of visual appropriation with any cultural signifier literally up for grabs. The title of this exhibit, "Digitally Bloodless" is chilling but apt. There is no warmth in the digital world, and certainly no blood. It is a cerebral realm of 0s and 1s, chips, electronic waves and pulses. Yet though technologically advanced, we still operate off our primitive urges – an obvious and ongoing contradiction of state.

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展览中的永恒身体 互动动画装置 2008

# 数码无血

## 谭力勤艺术作品

# “DIGITALLY BLOODLESS”

—Digital Artwork of LiQin Tan

策展人: Eileen Pearlman

谭力勤的作品探索集中于三个层面。其一为技术之复杂。其二为创作之大胆和难度。其三为概念之深度。

就技术而言，谭采用的三维动画软件包括Softimage|XSI、Maya、和ZBrush。后期制作使用Adobe AfterEffects、Combustion、Photoshop/CS和Premiere/Pro。他利用这些软件虚拟出铁锈腐烂、树木因环境压力和退化而形成的木瘤旋流纹理。而在制造这些独特的数码效果时，为了表现画面的准确性，制作时，在时间上，必须精确到平面深度微毫米的差异，才能勾勒出正确的三维数码图像。然后，将制作好的三维数码图像输入特殊的rF Scitex P2700打印机，通过专业的媒体传感器，印制各种不同质地的材料上，如羊皮、木板、岩石和钢板。

六屏系列的“岩熔人体”采用先进的Matrox TripleHead2Go视频分流器，模拟岩熔三维动画从一个屏幕奔腾到下一个屏幕。为了渲染此多层次的图形，多达100台电脑被连在一起。这通常被称作是渲染集群。在渲染集群里每一帧图像被可单独或者多台电脑同时运算，快速处理上传原材料，比



数码无血——实物装置

如模型和纹理，然后渲染呈现完整的图像。在“数码无血”和其他大幅钢板印刷作品中，往往15至20台电脑被用来渲染每一独立的静画面。

创作的大胆和难度在于设计的错综复杂，并利用编码转换二维线面成三维多面体，然后捕捉渲染再输出二维表面图像。而“数码无血”系列将刀直接插入画面表面又重新演绎原有的三维模式、雕塑特性。在数码农业工具系列作品中，滚动的磨盘石通过观众的参与而改变其在轨迹运动中的屏幕动画和声音来寓意现代社会对几千年农业社会的破坏。而另一系列的作品包括三维数码投影到牛皮上的创意——都是表现一种具有保护性和实用性强的最原生态形式。

在观念上，谭绝对开创了新的篇章。他始终在思考当代技术性极强的艺术媒介与人类之间的关联。不久前，我们的祖先还是在被皮毛包裹着居住在洞穴里，即使现在仍然可以在星球的偏远地区看到。谭的探索确实超越了国界和风格局限。

电脑艺术最令人不安的一面，就是它基于观念之上想象出的艺术形象——通常是艺术家的轨迹和思想框架。谭的大部分复杂工作在阐述一种固定的和性感的图谱，激情地寻找和发挥卡通式的幻想。无论在西方写实绘画还是传统中国水墨技法上都有严格的训练。在数码农业工具系列作品创作上，他利用了过往自身文革下放经历和熟悉的工具，用其简练的视觉表达诠释文化内涵——树结他木瘤，人体后脑勺，熔岩奔涌，女人体和碾磨盘石。这些元素都被煞费苦心而重新演绎。他把道教和《易经》中的“五行”——水、金、火、木和土作为直接指导原则，突出技术和自然之间的内在联系。

在驱动的动画装置“碾磨中的永恒异体”中，他依据自己作为一个小男孩被送到农村碾磨稻壳的经历，将传统碾磨盘石变成了一个现代动画装置。当磨盘转动时，嵌入式显示屏上便展现三维动画的变换。这不仅仅是一定技法的呈现，更重要的是，他所强调的是人类巨大的潜力和创造力，以及艺术家所拥有的技术和艺术协调力的强烈讨论。

这是一种对于形态变化媒介的观点，形态变化是当原始土著个体与他们的神灵进行对话时而采用的图腾外观和特征。这些视觉形象并非谭力能直接的过往，而是为了他的意图而借用或

挪用。然而，由于Andy Warhol, Richard Prince和Barbara Kruger的摄影作品，我们身处视觉侵占与诸多文化字面争夺时代。展览的标题，“数码无血”叫人不寒而栗却又恰如其分。在数码的时空里不存在温暖，当然也不会有血。这是一个0和1的二元编码，芯片，电子波和脉冲波的非感情的境地。然而，尽管技术先进，但我们仍然爆发原始冲动——一种清晰地和持续的矛盾状态。



风车 互动动画装置 2008年

# 数码艺术界的革命性的艺术家 REVOLUTION DIGITAL-ARTIST

## 谭力勤专访



【编者按】谭力勤早年是85美术新潮的活跃分子之一，95年，他转入数码艺术领域，独创“数码原始”形式，赢得美国及多国艺术界的一致好评，多次获得国际数码艺术展头奖和金奖，被美国主流媒体称为“数码艺术界革命性的艺术家”。2009年6月13日至7月10日在798缘分新媒体艺术空间举行了由Ellen Peerman策展的谭力勤数码艺术个展“数码无血”。此展由缘分新媒体艺术空间主办，由中国传媒大学、北京大学和美国新泽西州罗格斯大学协办，展出了谭力勤教授近年创作的观念动画装置与数码印制系列精品。自展览开幕以来，来此观看的艺术爱好者、媒体等络绎不绝，得到了艺术业内人士的很高评价，新视觉有幸就本次展览相关情况对谭力勤进行了访谈。

Editor: Hosted at the Yuanfen New Media Art Space in 798 art district from Jun 13th - July 10th 2009, LiQin Tan's "Digitally Bloodless" solo exhibition will feature his recent conceptual animations installations and digital print series. This exhibition is co-organized by Communication University of China, Peking University, and Rutgers University (USA). Curator is Ms. Ellen Pearlman.

Tan is a professor at Rutgers University (New Jersey, USA), and was one of the key activists during the 85' art trend of China. More than a decade ago, he transferred to the field of digital art, and since has created the original "Digital-Primitive" and "Digital Nature" form, which has won great acclaim and a number of awards from American and multinational art scenes. He also gives frequent lectures at universities worldwide, and has been called as "a revolutionary digital artist" by mainstream US media.

新: 您能否简述一下您近作“数码农业器具动画装置”系列的概念和创作动机?

谭: 此“数码农业器具动画装置”系列作品是在北京大学2008年教学时创作的。主要作品为风车、磨盘和大秤动画装置。其余水车、米墩和榨油坊等系列作品还在制作之中。我在尝试用现代数码三维动画与古老的农业器具的人为互动来注释工业对农业自然的毁灭与发展的相互冲突。

《重量中的观念波谱》是由一巨大实体秤、秤砣显示器、微型秤盘投影机、四台电脑、选择屏幕组成。观众可通过选择农业口号这一富有时代特征文字载体，来驱动巨大秤砣失衡，其中秤砣部分的动画也同步互动，从而揭示出观念赋有重量主题。

《风车装置》由一老式农用风车、两台电脑、小型投影机、三台显示器和二个小型感应器组成。参与者通过摇动手柄来驱动风车转动。风车内部的硬件采集风车转动的数据，传送到电脑中。电脑通过风车的静止或转动来控制调用播放用不同的动画。风车动画幽默地显示收走的是挣扎的农民自身，而留下的是各种触目惊心的蝗虫。作品通过强烈的视觉震撼和出人意料的结局揭示了广大农民窘迫的生存状态。巨大的压力，压弯了百姓的腰，压痛了所有关心农民命运的人的心。

《碾磨中的永恒异体》由一自制的农用大磨盘、两台电脑、六台显示器和许多小型感应器组成。作品采用中国传统农业器具磨盘的碾磨过程来表现工业化对传统农业以及传统文化生活的侵略和破坏。作品中碾子是一种机械文明的推动力量，机械开始蔓延生长吞没原来的麦田。当磨盘第二次碾磨过时，后工业机械运动则展示出回归自然的画面。历史它惊人的相似性，总是在无限的重复自己。这个演变的过程和“磨”的运动吻合，而时间和空间中的圆周运动和碾过的元素组成时代的新元素。

新: 您为什么关注着中国几千年的“农耕文化”? 它与当代科技有何关系?

谭: 中国是几千年的农业大国，其农业科技从春秋铁农具开始到近百年前一直领先于世界，并发明和创造了许多实用和独特的农业器具。其中分为“田器”、“农器”和“农具”，我所关注的主要是“农具”部分。1969年我12岁时随父母下放农村，乡村中各种的新式玩具(农具)深深地吸引了我，当时农村的空风车是不准小孩捣捣的，大人说，捣空风车会“肚子疼”，而我便是这种“肚子疼”的状态中度过我宝贵的少年时光。其次，对农业器具的数码互动探讨也是对我“数码原始”观念的延伸。把当代数码与古代农业科技与文化的融合是我数码艺术探索主题之一。

农业是我国科技发展的最早体现，中国现代科技也就是在此基础上延伸

的。一个新与旧，当代与古代的组合很默契地构成了中国科技发展的碰撞和演变。

新: 您对农耕文化的重新数码注释是否带有一种怀旧的情绪? 或者一种虚拟式的批判性?

谭: 两者皆有。怀旧与创新并不矛盾——它也是我艺术探索的两个关键部分。而我作品的批判性则是采用数码中的虚拟性。在《碾磨中永恒异体》的互动装置的作品中，其批判性是明显的。每当碾过显示器，玻璃的粉碎声音象征着一种文明的冲突和碰撞，从而激活三维动画——工业社会对农业社会文明的摧残与毁灭。通过六套动画与显示器互替和交换阐述艺术家本人对其摧残过程虚拟式的批判。

在《重量观念波谱》作品中，通过实体秤来展示各种大跃进口号的重量。观念从物质上来说是没有重量的，而作品中虚拟重量确是衡量观念激进程度的标准。观众可任意选择各种农业观念来“秤”，同时激活了秤砣上的“三维观念”动画。根据其选择，大型实体秤砣和秤砣会自动上升或下降。其虚拟结果实际上构成了对当代农业口号观念的赞扬和批评。

