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(Previous spread)

HUNG-CHIH PENG, *The Deluge - Noah's Ark*, 2014, mixed media, dimensions variable. Courtesy Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei.

(This page)

HAEGUE YANG, *Medicine Man - Indiscreet Other World*, 2010, clothing rack, casters, light bulbs, cable, cord, water color, lacquer, metal ring, metal chain, milar and aluminum reflector, 180 x 90 x 110 cm. Courtesy Zabudowicz Collection, London, and Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei.

(Opposite page, top)

TETSUMI KUDO, *Fossil in Hiroshima*, 1976, embossing and spray paint on paper, 65.6 x 50 cm. Courtesy the artist's estate and Andrea Rosen Gallery Inc., New York.

(Opposite page, bottom)

TETSUMI KUDO, *Meditation in the Endless Tape of the Future-past*, 1979, mixed media, 33 x 19 x 27 cm. Courtesy Galeri Albert Benamou, Paris.

A "democracy of objects." That was a quote from Levi Bryant in your essay.

Right. It's interesting, but I have some criticisms. In this world, where everything is an object, from beings to matter, there are only classes of objects. In a way, it's a dream for capitalism, a dream for the market. If everything is only an object, that's exactly what Karl Marx described in *Das Kapital*. So that's problematic for me.

In terms of the form of the artworks, what differences will we see?

With the new generation, relations are now mediated through different types of objects. Like for the Brazilian group Opavivará!, it's through plants that relations take place. They are preparing a huge sculpture designed to mix herbs to create new teas. It's a circular wooden structure, which is inspired by the shape of the traditional Chinese tea table. At the very center of it is a structure that allows you to mix different herbs, including medicinal herbs that come from all over Taiwan. They're also allowing visitors to recline in hammocks. They really believe in this idea of idleness, you know, doing nothing, which has also some postcolonial implications because they are Brazilians.

There are also several other works focusing on the earth as a sort of raw material. Are you trying to present examples of better ways to materially connect with the physical world? Or are you critiquing the way we exploit the environment?

Both are present in the exhibition. We have ecologically aware artists like Joan Jonas or Nicolás Uriburu, and also artists that try to engage with the structures of matter. Alisa Baremboym and Pamela Rosenkranz are actually engaged in the exploration of different combinations of matter. They are using polymers and new materials, trying to understand the geophysical structure of some elements and using them in their work. Roger Hiorns is showing a jet plane that has been reduced to dust.

How can a jet plane be reduced to dust? Is this symbolic, or is it literally pulverized?

Literally pulverized. You take a plane and *fwwwwppppp!* Crystalization of the plane.

It almost seems like a biblical metaphor, from dust to dust.

Yes, it could be. I'm not sure he's interested in such things. I think it's a very materialistic orientation.

Just to clarify—when you're talking about materialism, you're talking about physicality, not Marxist dialectical materialism.

That's correct. We're exploring the physicality of the world.

Let's return briefly to these pieces about the environment. The environment is a huge concern, and issues such as global warming, carbon emissions and so on are well known. Where do you draw the line between an artwork and activism?

The line is fairly easily drawn, I think. An artwork for me goes far beyond the denunciation of a situation, or the critique of something. If you could say it by writing, for example, why would you make an artwork? The point is that an artwork is always more complex, and it brings you to think through a different channel.

In Joan Jonas's work on glaciers, how does she go beyond activism?

It's a very complex installation, which actually uses glaciers as a



formal pattern, and it's using glass beads and different projections. It's called *Reanimation* (2010–12) and was shown at the last Documenta. Joan Jonas has reorganized the piece and expanded it for the Taipei Biennial, which I am happy about. It's not a work that says, "Hey, beware. The glaciers are melting." It provides another way of comprehending the situation. It's like Picasso's *Guernica* (1937), it is not only a denunciation of war, it goes beyond that. In that sense, Jonas's *Reanimation II* (2014) is the *Guernica* of glaciers, of global warming.

Are there any other artists or projects you'd like to mention?

All of the 52, actually. Plus, it's totally the conversation between the works that's interesting to me. If you install a work of Tetsumi Kudo next to something by Haegue Yang, like I've done, or if you install it next to a work by Patrick van Caeckenbergh, the meaning will slide. I'm concentrating for the moment, before the exhibition opens, on the slidings from one work to another. It's difficult to take one work apart and talk about it, because I'm interested in dialogues here.

This is your first time curating a biennial in Asia. You're based in Paris and very much engaged in the European culture of contemporary art and philosophy. How do you adapt those ideas to the context of Taiwan?

In a way, the idea of the exhibition, "The Great Acceleration," is also about the advancement of globalization. But the exhibition also involves a theme about how we are connected to other types of beings, and this brings into play a very important difference between Asia and Europe, and that is our relationship to human consciousness. Human consciousness has been considered the measure of all things in European philosophy since the ancient Greeks. Today what's interesting, especially in philosophical trends

