

DING SHIWEI: DAYBREAK

Text/Lin Zi-Artforum

Ding Shiwei's first solo exhibition DAYBREAK is composed of three pieces: video works *Double Act* (2013) and *Goodbye, Utopia* (2014) and a set of image installations *Daybreak* (2013-2016). Ding's works are usually presented through programs, and he brought to this exhibition his recent Utopia program works. The same signs and symbols in different forms are seen in his three pieces, and the spectators have a strong feeling that is close to desperation.

Goodbye, Utopia is presented in huge black space. It includes nine independent animation clips, each of which offers a magical but obscure description in their own way. The spectators can find familiar ideological signs and hints in each scene, which usually ridiculously appear in the cloud like God, at the point of the sun, at the top of the monument or mountain. With slow changes in the storytelling, these signs also change at a tricky pace, and finally into the national emblem, a factory, a grounding ship and a headless man. With continuous, low and worrying background music – like the baritone chorus in Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the familiar political signs are transformed once and again. It is not simply transformation, but also transmutation. The two ways of changing are magical – terrifying but also godly correct.

Like *Goodbye, Utopia*, *Double Act* is a three-minute animation clip, with transformed new signs: red scarf and tie, withered plant and factory chimney, a faceless man and ears, and a galloping horse and a faceless man with ties...in each scene, the artist seems to use Jung's prototype as his language to talk with the spectators, with the regular and monotonous knocking sound of the metal. Finally, we see numerous human body images trapped in a white coffin-like enclosure, and numerous white narrow enclosures spin and swing in boundless blackness. The *Daybreak* series are a set of mirrors of different

sizes (facing up), as well as the mirror-size black boards suspended over the mirror. These black boards once again remind us of the creepy black monuments enlightening the primitives in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. When the spectators approach the works, they would find that, at the near distance, the mirror reflects the image of the suspended black board. These images also come from the magical scenes with political signs and power symbols in *Goodbye, Utopia* and *Double Act*. When spectators shake the suspended black board, the image in the mirror also shakes, like opening a window in the floor. Seeing the creepy images shaking on the floor under their foot, the spectators feel another kind of terror: those political conflicts and stubbornness that we thought had been away, are in fact the floor on which we are standing.

The endless darkness in *Double Act*, the suspended black boards in *Daybreak*, as well as the black images of the political figures all imply that the control and power from ideology have been in our body, flooding in every inch of the space among people.