

## IMPRESSIONS ON DING SHIWEI'S SOLO EXHIBITION AT IMAGOKINETICS

Text / Zhou Tong, ArtAlpha

Translation / ChatGPT

Since Ding Shiwei's solo exhibition *What We Talk About When We Talk About Sea Horizon & Moon* at One Way Art Gallery in Beijing, two years have already passed. During this time, I also had the opportunity to engage in deeper conversations with him in Yinchuan, where he participated in the group exhibition curated by Huang Mei.

Unknowingly, I finally encountered his new solo show *Enter the Void* (2020) at the Imagokinetics Lab in Hangzhou, which the artist had meticulously refined over eight months.

For an artist, constant progress is essential, as it verifies the insights that emerge through deeper research. In Ding Shiwei's case, this pursuit is especially evident. Of course, if one were to look only at the surface of the exhibition, this sense of deliberateness is not immediately apparent — on the contrary, the traces of labor appear increasingly hidden. Yet behind this refinement lies his relentless pursuit of artistic extremity.

Unlike many video artists, Ding Shiwei carries a natural obsession with the metaphysical dimension of his work. I still remember, during *What We Talk About When We Talk About Sea Horizon & Moon*, he retained something of a student's persistence: his works pointed with clarity and certainty, and his intentions were immediately legible. Today, however, his metaphysical reflection has become embedded within the works themselves. The interpretive field is widened, while the indexical precision is compressed. In other words, his works invite interpretations beyond what the artist himself provides, opening up multiple possible layers.

This exhibition left me with the impression of clarity and precision, devoid of excess or drag, with each piece forming part of a larger relational whole. The structural unity of the exhibition brought four interconnected spaces into one continuum. Particularly noteworthy was the meticulous exhibition design — for example, the final room, whose small mouse-hole-like aperture seemed to close the loop directly with the first work. Likewise, the clean wiring of the entrance space, contrasted with the tangle of black cables in the final room, produced an oppositional relationship.

All these details point to the artist's focused grasp of a central theme, binding each work tightly to the others, and bringing the whole to a coherent conclusion. Through careful spatial orchestration, the interrelation of works was achieved with extraordinary precision.

The path of artistic refinement is especially visible on the level of technique. Ding Shiwei devoted immense energy to this exhibition. For example, in choosing the liquids for two works in the third gallery, he repeatedly experimented — from purified water, to ultra-pure water, to formalin, and finally to the solution we now see. Countless failures and retries were required before arriving at a medium that preserved the liquid's transparent purity while preventing circuit boards and screens from shorting or cracking.

The same dedication extended to the production of each transparent display case. Dissatisfied with anything short of perfection, he personally polished every angle to the extreme. These incremental technical refinements ensure that his works are not hindered by technical flaws — in other words, their quality is so high that the “material presence” of technology disappears, allowing the works to appear with absolute immediacy.

This technical precision, combined with the works' clear direction, produces an elusive sense of refinement — what one might call a “high-level aura.” Whether in *The Abyss Watchers* or *The Jokers' Revolution*, each work conveys lightness and delight. Their philosophical weight is sublimated through craft, leaving audiences unaware of any heaviness.

It is like using an Apple computer: the delicacy of industrial design erases the sense of materiality, allowing the user to focus entirely on function. Similarly, just as we inhabit our bodies without constantly noticing their presence, Ding Shiwei's art focuses attention directly on the essence of art itself.

One of my favorite aspects is the role of chance. In the central gallery, three sensor-based works interfered with one another due to the density of sensors, creating a technical glitch. As a result, the three pieces could not be experienced simultaneously. Yet this “flaw” gave rise to new layers of meaning. To view the two wall-mounted works, one had to turn off the central piece. This dynamic suggested that relations of strength and weakness transform seemingly unified positions into oppositional stances: even harmony collapses into conflict once imbalance emerges.

For this exhibition, Ding Shiwei invested immense thought and design. The outcome was a broadened scope of viewing, compelling audiences to generate associations and reflections, each arriving at their own interpretive pathways. This multiplicity — of focal points, layers, structures, and even dimensions — enriches pure consciousness with added weight, while producing subconscious semantic overlaps.

From this perspective, Ding Shiwei's exhibition is undoubtedly a success. At a time when simply raising meaningful questions is already rare, to also contribute to the very pathways of thought is exceptional. At the higher, metaphysical level of aesthetic reflection, such achievements are few and far between. I hope that Ding continues to refine and deepen his practice, ultimately establishing a fully autonomous artistic universe of his own.