CINEMA 2.0:
超眼球 Counter Visions
媒體藝術展
Media Arts Exhibition

肉眼之外的電影想像
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在電影論述和藝術中，視覺性（visuality）有着一種不能被挑戰和取替的首要地位。電影被譽為流動影像的媒體，而一些經常為它發聲的倡導者亦常常以其視覺屬性的特質來去掩蓋、捍衛或甚批評這種藝術形式。我們很難想像沒有影像的電影。影像，以至觀看影像，是構成定義電影的一項主要元素。因此我們今天所認知的電影是一種以視覺優先其他感官，並把視覺作為最大關注和重要的高度「眼球中心化」（ocular-centric）的媒體。但是視覺作為電影藝術的基礎就是否真的不能被質疑？是否沒有光、影像和觀看就一定不可以為電影？我們說去看電影，但是否也可以是去聽電影、觸摸電影和嗅電影？以「非視覺」為中心的電影是否有可能、具作用和富有意義？是否有歷史先例、技術彎路和不正規的形式偏離傳統，並講述一個不一樣的電影故事？

電影作為視聽設備

英文電影一詞（cinema）與圖像、視覺或光線並無直接關係。該詞語來自法語 cinématographe，字源於希臘文「移動」或「動態」的意思。因此從詞源學的角度來看，視覺並不包含在這媒體名稱的固有意義之內。除了詞源之外，早期電影史也可讓我們窺探出一個截然不同的電影身份故事。誠然，電影的同步聲畫技術要到一九二零年代才成熟。但雖然如此，我們不能因而稱此之前的電影為「無聲」。實際上，早期的電影播放已有現場音樂和旁白。更重要的是，有很多早期的技術嘗試同時呈現聲音和視覺，其中以愛迪生（Thomas Edison）發明的 Kinetophones 最為著名。雖然 Kinetophone（以及其他類似的聲畫同步系統）在技術上不夠成熟和完善，但這已凸顯出早期發明家和先行者的眼光和視野，就是要讓電影結合聲與畫。簡而言之，聲音在電影這媒體的開始時已經是一個重要的存在。

媒介的混合性：沒有視覺媒介

電影裏視覺至上的這一現象也許不是一個孤立的例子。在西方文化和知識體系裏，它只是眾多以視覺優先於其他感官的實例的其中一個。在眾多批判以視覺中心的思維的評論當中，美國學者 W.J.T. Mitchell 尤其在這個問題上寫了大量的文章。其核心思想可簡單概括為：沒有視覺媒體。Mitchell 在他一篇廣受讚譽的論文《沒有視覺媒體》（There are no visual media）中作了一個簡單而深刻的觀察：

「視覺媒體」是泛指如電視、電影、攝影和繪畫等媒體的日常用語，但這詞語高度不精確且具有誤導性。只要仔細一想，便可知全部所謂的視覺媒體都涵蓋了其他感官（尤其是觸覺和聽覺）。從感覺種類的角度來看，所有媒體都是「混合媒體」。[1]

Mitchell 的論點是對現代主義美學的回應和批判，尤其是像 Clement Greenberg 和 Michael Fried 這樣的藝術家所倡導的那種純粹主義的批判。對於這種建基於「媒體特殊性」概念的純粹主義，Mitchell 作出令人信服的反駁：

「媒體和中介的概念已經包含了感官、知覺和符號學元素的某種混合。這裏並沒有任何純粹的聽覺、觸覺或嗅覺媒體。但是這結論並不表示不能鑒別各種媒體，反而是能更精確地去區分混合的媒體。若說所有媒體都是混合媒體，它們並非都以相同的方式結合，當中不同元素的比例也不一樣。」

眼睛之外的觀看

觀看與視覺有着莫大的關係。但是視覺實際上是一個遠比光和眼睛這詩意隱喻複雜得多的過程。觀看是一個涉及大腦和其他認知功能的複雜程序，其中眼睛主要負責整個過程的光學和化學部分。視覺是一種高端的光接收，與大腦和認知功能息息相關。

最近的科學研究甚至顯示動物中存在非視覺的光接收。[2] 換句話說，感光不僅局限於眼睛。當然我們不應將感光與視覺的全部混淆。但這的確也證明了有「獨立於眼睛」的觀看形式的事實與可能。此外，近年來也看到仿生視覺或視覺假體等領域的逐漸進步，其中發展出與人類生物視覺系統相連接的電子設備，用以幫助有視力障礙的人恢復部分視力。儘管這些程序大多數仍然是「眼睛依賴」（即與視覺神經相關），但已有一些更先進的仿生視覺系統能繞開了視覺神經和眼睛而與大腦直接接觸。[3] 這些未來的科技為理解視覺的實用和象徵意義打開了全新的大門。在不久的將來，我們也許可以通過直接接駁大腦系統來觀看或欣賞電影。眼睛不再是人類觀看的必然工具或必要基礎。

反視覺作為激進願景

除了歷史的先例和技術發展提供了一些挑戰電影中視覺優先論的例子外，長久以來亦有不少藝術家質疑電影中視覺的優先地位，亦即電影的「眼睛中心主義」，從而試圖把這媒體解放來作其他創造的可能和實驗性的表達。為針對電影的視覺優先地位，藝術家實驗和採用了不同的策略：有些專注於媒體的非視覺方面，而另一些則通過暴露創作過程及其當中的工具來作解構。

Derek Jarman 的最後一部長篇作品《藍》（Blue, 1993）可以說是在眾多挑戰電影的視覺中心性的藝術作品中最著名的例子之一。這部高度自傳性的電影只有一個持續約 79 分鐘的藍色畫面。這「空白」的藍色畫面，配上導演及其他演員講及日常和其他話題的旁白，以及作曲家 Simon Fisher Turner 的音樂。這部沒有影像的作品把觀眾放置到非一般的電影領域，把其中親密的體驗重新定向和聚焦到語言和聲音的範疇。《藍》既是一部描述疾病和死亡的個人電影詩篇，也可以理解為對傳統電影形式概念的徹底否定和挑戰。

另一部沒有那麼個人化，但同樣著名的反視覺電影是白南准的《電影禪》（Zen for Film, 1965）。 讓未曝光的菲林在放映機上運行，《電影禪》就正如媒體藝術保存家 Heike Helfert 所稱為的一種「反電影」（anti-film）。通過製造銀幕上的「空隙」，白南准創建了一個具否定性和暗示性的體驗空間，通過存在與不在之間的互動，他對媒體的士紳化作出荒誕主義式的攻擊，迫使觀眾積極參與觀影過程，而不是沉醉在被藝術家提供的娛樂之中。

Louise Lawler 的擴展電影《A Movie Will Be Shown Without the Picture》、Jim Campbell 的媒體藝術作品《Low Resolutions》系列（1999-）和 Britt Hatzius 的表演《Blind Cinema》（2015）等創作同樣明確地質疑電影的「眼睛中心主義」。這些藝術作品試圖超越傳統的電影視覺概念，並提出批判性的反思和激進的願景，從而對電影媒體發展的可能性提供一種非本質主義和非確定性的觀點。

通過置換電影中的視覺性，這展覽把反視覺（counter visual）作為一種激進的願景來試圖與電影對話，協調以至超越這媒體原先被加諸的界限。在這前題下，「反視覺」一詞是一種嘗試取代電影傳統視覺至上的辯證法，並同時複雜和補充當中的內容來去提供一些關於觀影和視覺的新的思考方式和可能。

（中譯：鍾德勝｜校訂：葉旭耀）

[1] Mitchell, W.J.T. (2005) There are no visual media, *Journal of Visual Culture*, Vol.4(2), pp.257-266

[2] Cronin, Thomas (2017, August 10). Seeing without the eyes – the unexpected world of nonvisual photoreception. Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/seeing-without-eyes-the-unexpected-world-of-nonvisual-photoreception-79166

[3] Contributors. (2017, September 26) See the future: the bionic eye. Retrieved from https://www.science.org.au/curious/people-medicine/bionic-eye

Cinematic Imaginary Beyond the Naked Eyes
Text: Ip Yuk-yiu

The primacy of visuality has rarely been contested in both the discourse and art of cinema. Cinema is hailed as a medium of moving images, and many of its most vocal advocates have championed, defended, or critiqued the art form *on the ground* or *in terms of* the specificity of its visual characteristics. It is hard to conceive cinema without images. Images, and by extension seeing images, constitute a primary part in the definition of the medium. As such, cinema as we know it today, is a highly ocular-centric medium, a medium prioritising sight over other senses that places the uttermost attention and importance to visuality that catered to the eyes. However, does it then follow that visuality is an uncontestable foundation of the art of cinema? Is it really impossible to envision cinema without light, images and seeing? We say we watch a movie. But how about to listen to a movie? To touch a movie? To smell a movie? Can the conception of a non ocular-centric cinematic imaginary be possible, useful and meaningful? Are there historical precedents, technical detours and formal anomalies that deviates and tells a different story?

Cinema as audio-visions, and beyond

The word "cinema" denotes nothing immediately about images, sight or light. The word was borrowed from the French word *cinématographe* which has a Greek root, meaning "to move" or "movement". Therefore, from an etymological perspective, the visual is not inherent in the name of the medium. Beyond the etymological root, a closer look at the early history of cinema will also render a very different story of its identity. It is true that synchronised sound in cinema did not mature until the 1920's. However, it is one thing to say that there is no synchronised sound in cinema, but it is a very different thing to call cinema "silent" because there is no synchronised sound. The uses of live music and lecturers were in fact common in early showings. More importantly, there were numerous attempts in presenting sound and sight together, with Thomas Edison's Kinetophones being one of the better known examples. Despite technical immaturity and imperfection, Kinetophones (as well as other similar sound-image systems) were clear and strong evidence that demonstrated the visions of early inventors and pioneers, that is, cinema is for the eyes and ears together at the outset. In short, sound is very much present since the inception of the medium.

Medium as hybridity: There are no visual media

The primacy of visuality as found in cinema is perhaps not an isolated instance. It is only one instance among many that epitomised a long tradition of ocular-centrism, prioritising sight over other senses, as rooted in Western culture and knowledge systems. Among many critiques of visual-centered thinking, the American scholar W.J.T. Mitchell has written extensively on the subject and summarised his thoughts in the most succinct terms: there are no visual media. In his widely read and celebrated essay "There are no visual media", Mitchell made a simple and yet profound observations:

"Visual media" is a colloquial expression used to designate things such as television, film, photography and painting, etc. But it is highly inexact and misleading. On closer inspection, all the so-called visual media turn out to involve the other senses (especially touch and hearing). All media are, from the standpoint of sensory modality, "mixed media".[1]

Mitchell's argument is a response and a critique of the high modernist aesthetics, especially the sort of purism being promoted by art critics like Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried. Arguing against hygienic purity, Mitchell made a convincing argument against views that are based on the notion of medium specificity:

"(T)he very notion of a medium and of mediation already entails some mixture of sensory, perceptual and semiotic elements. There are no purely auditory, tactile, or olfactory media either. However, this conclusion does not lead to the impossibility of distinguishing one medium from another. What it makes possible is a more precise differentiation of mixtures. If all media are mixed media, they are not all mixed in the same way, with the same proportions of elements."

Seeing beyond the eyes

Visuality has much to do with seeing. But seeing is actually a much more complicated process that goes beyond the poetic metaphor of light and eyes. Seeing is a complex process that involves the brain and other cognitive faculty where the eyes accounts mainly for the optical and chemical part of the whole process. Vision is an advanced form of photo-reception that involves other cerebral and cognitive functions.

Recent scientific studies even suggested that there is non-visual photo-reception in animals.[2] In other words, light detection is not only confined to the eyes. Of course, photo-reception should not be confused with seeing in its entirety. However, it does point to the fact and possibility of an "eye-independent" form of seeing. Moreover, in recent years, we witness gradual advances in the field of bionic vision or visual prosthesis, where electrical devices are implanted and interfaced with human biological visual systems in order to help people with sight problems to restore their partial visions. While most of these procedures are still "eye-dependent" (i.e. tied to the optic nerve), some more radical forms of bionic vision involve a kind of direct-to-brain system that interfaced directly with the brain, thus bypassing the optic nerve and the eye altogether.[3] This futuristic vision opens up a whole new door for the understanding of the practical act and symbolic meaning of seeing. In the near future, we might be able to see, or watch a movie, by directly plugging into our cerebral systems. The eye is no longer the required tool or necessary foundation for human seeing.

Counter visual as radical aspirations

Beyond historical antedates and technological developments that challenged the thesis of the primacy of visuality in cinema, artists had long questioned the privilege of the visual, cinema's ocular-centrism, in the attempt of freeing the medium for other creative possibilities and experimental expression. Countering the primacy of visuality in cinema, artists experimented and adopted different strategies: some focused on the non-visual aspects of the medium while others lay bare the creative process and device.

Among the many artistic works that contended the centrality of visuality in cinema, one of the most notable examples goes to Derek Jarman's last feature-length project *Blue* (1993). A highly autobiographical work, *Blue* consists of a saturated blue screen that last for about 79 minutes. The "empty" blue screen was accompanied by a series of narrations musing on everyday and other matters voiced by the filmmaker and other casts, together with a soundtrack created by the composer Simon Fisher Turner. The absence of images transposed the audience to a different cinematic domain, re-directing and re-focusing the intimate experience to the realm of language and sound. At once a highly personal and poetic film that deals with illness and human mortality, Blue can also be read as a radical negation and challenge to the traditional conception of the film form.

A less personal but equally well-known example of the counter visual aesthetics is Nam June Paik's notorious *Zen for Film* (1965). A film projection of unexposed film running through the projector, *Zen for Film* stands in as a kind of "anti-film" as described by media conservator Heike Helfert. Through the "void" of the screen, Paik created an experiential space that both denies and suggests. An interplay of absence and presence, *Zen for Film* is Paik's absurdist attack on the gentrified medium, forcing the audience to engage actively instead of being entertained by the givens as feed by the artists.

Louise Lawler's expanded cinema *A Movie Will Be Shown Without the Picture* (1979), Jim Campbell's media art project *Low Resolution* series (1999-) and Britt Hatzius's performance *Blind Cinema* (2015) are some of the other interesting works that also explicitly question cinema's ocular-centrism. These artistic undertakings aspire to go beyond the limits of the traditional conception of cinematic visuality and served as a sort of critical reflection and radical aspiration, offering a non-essentialist and non-determinist view on the possible development of cinema.

By displacing the role of the visual in cinema, the exhibition adopts **counter visual** as a form of radical aspiration that aims to dialogue, reconcile and transgress prescribed boundaries of the cinematic medium. The counter visual, as defined and used in the current context, is a dialectics in displacing the classical primacy of visuality in cinema while complicating and complementing its terms by offering new possible ways of thinking about seeing and visuality.

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[1] Mitchell, W.J.T. (2005) There are no visual media, *Journal of Visual Culture*, Vol.4(2), pp.257-266

[2] Cronin, Thomas (2017, August 10). Seeing without the eyes – the unexpected world of nonvisual photoreception. Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/seeing-without-eyes-the-unexpected-world-of-nonvisual-photoreception-79166

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