

## Ghost and the Machine 鬼魅機器

「要是我記得帶上一台柯達照相機那該多好！  
我可以瞬間把地下世界的景色拍下來，留待餘閒時仔細研究。」

— 威爾斯 (H.G. Wells) 《時間機器》

「電影是從 1895 年開始的全新生命體驗。  
1877 和 1895 這兩個年份是做夢力量的器官學歷史上的兩個重要轉捩點。」

— 史蒂格勒 (Bernard Stiegler) 《夢的器官學與元電影》

保存與收藏的需要和慾望，在十九世紀後變得尤其逼切和重要。一方面，這是人類恆久以來與時間和有限性的不斷競賽；與此同時，這逼切的欲望是對現代化的過程與環境在這三個世紀所帶來龐大而迅猛的社會、經濟和科技轉變的歷史性回應。達蓋爾 (Louis Daguerre) 在 1839 年推出攝影機，愛迪生 (Thomas Edison) 則在 1877 年帶來了留聲機，這個兩個重要的時刻均體現着一個時代的狂熱精神。

活動電影機 (cinematographe) 的出現把十九世紀的檔案熱帶到頂峰。那是一部可以留住人類短暫生命、甚至讓生命再現的出色機器。自此以降，藉着這機器所產生的搖曳鬼影，人類在歷史上終於首次可以（再）經歷已逝去的時間和生命。這部小巧的機器把時間凝固和具象化，讓其成為可被量化和觀看的組塊，超越並轉化時間轉瞬即逝的本質。這些膠卷上的活動影像儘管細小而黯淡，它們所記錄和展示的被攝物卻又栩栩如生得令人不安。這些影像揮示出一種叫人相信它們與現實存在本體論的優先關係的信念，是其他檔案媒介缺乏或所不能比擬的地方。隨着不斷轉動機器中的電影膠卷，人工記憶於焉誕生，我們亦得以重掌時間、戰勝時間。

### 客觀性的記錄

攝影、留聲、電影等記錄媒介，透過技術方法摹擬生命中所發生過的，並以資訊的形式把它儲存和再呈現。十九

世紀以前，世上並無任何記錄科技，不管你是帝王將相抑或布衣平民，也無法透過外在的方法去重新經驗已逝的時光。昨日之日不可留，無人能以外在的形式將之留住或重生。當然，在記錄科技出現之前，書寫或繪畫等媒介可以就過去發生的事件提供參考，但相比之下，他們卻欠缺了一種能夠給予人客觀性的能力。相反，十九世紀的現代記錄科技，憑着其機械式的客體性，因而能夠產生和揮示出一種具指涉真實性 (indexical authenticity) 的信念效果。這種特質是舊檔案媒介如書寫、繪畫等所欠奉的。機械式的客觀與巴贊 (Andre Bazin) 的寫實主義電影理論遙遙呼應。其寫實主義理論框架正正建基於電影的「物性」(thing-ness) 和電影能自動化和客觀地將生活呈現的能力。巴贊將電影的機械性質和繪畫等媒介的「不可避免的主觀性」作一對照，並繼而指出：

「在原物體與它的再現物之間只有另一個實物發生作用，這真是破天荒第一次。外部世界的影像第一次按照嚴格的決定論自動生成，不需人加以干預，參與創造。」<sup>1</sup>

巴贊理論中電影攝影圖像本體論的優先地位及其所延伸的客觀性的論點是否成立或許值得商榷。但可以肯定的是：現代記錄科技，提供了嶄新經歷過去的方式和對媒介呈現的信服，這跟與從前的再現和檔案媒介大相逕庭。這些嶄新的方式和信念形成一種現代感知的觸覺和基礎，讓我們去體驗當代的时间、歷史和記憶。

### 對遺忘的焦慮

現代記錄科技不單提供保存和收藏的創新方法與標準，也開啟了體驗時間和記憶的嶄新方法。藉着記錄科技的幫助，記憶不再純粹是短暫的單一事件，局限存在於擁有記憶的人的個人心理。透過記錄技術方法的中介，記憶成為了可重覆的、可再生的夢境並能夠進行複製、分享和交易。當我們有能力以中介虛擬形式保存和重播時間之後，我們對時間的感覺及體驗亦同時出現翻天覆地的變化。電影就像埃及古基的陶製小雕像，嘗試「複製外形以保存生命」<sup>2</sup>。電影以甜蜜的冷藏夢去暫停、保存時間，不只是為了檔案收藏、藝術創作、知性研究等目的，亦同時渴望成為人類超越生死的象徵。這個夢與願景或能從廿一世紀延長生命與冷凍人體的科技中找到相同的共鳴。由是觀之，十九世紀對於記錄科技的狂熱，一方面回應了自古以來人類封存時間／生命的夢想，另一方面也切合了文化上建構現代時間觀念的需要，以預備迎接社會急遽轉變和迅速發展的新時代。

十九世紀帶來的轉變（如都市化、殖民主義、現代交通等發展）日益急劇，速度已超越了人類所能掌握、理解和盛載的程度。在一個高舉變革和速度的時代，人類記憶已無法追上高速發展所帶來的海量變化與資訊，遺忘亦因而成了時代巨輪的副產品。社會急遽轉變令人類對這種嶄新的現代時間觀念產生焦慮。在個人與社會層面上，遺忘與焦慮無可避免地增加了人類對保存的需要與渴求。不論個人抑或國家都再無法控制歷史的急速進程，於是對抗個人和文化失憶的唯一辦法，就是為逝去的東西留個記錄。記錄與檔案是「震懾」時間的最後板斧，讓生命能夠在轉變與消逝之中得以保存。記錄科技因此是一種回憶機器。這機器推翻時間流逝的本質，容許人類在時光的殘骸中保存住一些痕跡。

整個世紀的快速增長和轉變，凸顯並加劇了遺忘這一個問題。面對迅速變化的現實，遺忘成了人類渴望保存、收藏和記錄背後的原動力。三種定義現代媒介經驗的記錄科技先驅——攝影、留聲、電影——均無一例外在十九世紀被「發明」出來。這事實並不教人感到意外。同理，威爾斯關於時間旅程的經典科幻作品《時間機器》在 1895 年出版也是電影史常引為電影的神秘誕生年份，兩者之間也絕非偶然的巧合。將實用記錄工具與威爾斯的虛構小說發明所連繫起來的，正正是兩者都希望透過現代科技去推翻時間本質的共同幻想與願望。

### 電影作為時光機器

電影常常被視為時光機器。除了關於旅程，時光機也是關於保存與備份（正如蘋果電腦也以「Time Machine」作為其備份系統的名稱）。如果我們認真對待「電影作為時光機」這詩意的隱喻，並探索其意義，那麼我們必須將電影同時理解為一趟虛擬旅程與一種能夠辨認、儲藏和啟動與過去、現在、未來相關的資訊的回憶機器。

這個展覽會透過三位國際藝術家的作品 — Polymorf（荷蘭）、Verena Friedrich（德國）及 Phil Solomon（美國）來探討電影作為**記憶替代**和**時間機器**這課題。通過藝術家的作品，我們希望探索時間性和記憶的概念與功能如何隨着現代科技興起而演化，以及藝術家如何創造符號與敘事去面對歷史、時間和人類的有限性。

<sup>1</sup> 譯按：譯文參照安德烈·巴贊（著），崔君衍（譯），〈攝影影像的本體論〉，《電影是甚麼》，中國：江蘇教育出版社，2005，頁 16。

<sup>2</sup> 同上，頁 11。

"If only I had thought of a Kodak!

I could have flashed that glimpse of the Under-world in a second, and examined it at leisure."

- H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*

"Cinema is a new experience of life that begins in 1895. These dates, 1877 and 1895, constitute two immense turns in the organological history of the power(s) to dream."

- Bernard Stiegler, *The Organology of Dreams and Arche-Cinema*

The need and desire to preserve and archive is of pressing urgency and importance in the 19th century. On the one hand, it is the ongoing battle of human struggle against time and finitude. At the same time, this burning desire is a historical response that came along with modernisation, a process and milieu that set off massive and rapid socio-economic-technological changes beginning at least three centuries ago. The arrival of Louis Daguerre's photographic system in 1839 and the introduction of Thomas Edison's phonograph in 1877 were two notable and exemplary moments that epitomised the craze and spirit of the epoch.

The 19th century archive fever accumulated and concluded with the grand invention of the cinematographe, the machine par excellence for fixing and resurrecting human evanescence. Since then, and for the very first time in human history, people were able to (re)experience time and life that is past via ghostly flickering shadows produced by the cinema machine. This small mechanical device freezes and concretises time into quantifiable and viewable blocks, displacing and transcending the fleeting nature of time. Meanwhile these celluloid moving shadows, small and dim as they are, registered and manifested an uncanny resemblance and disquieting vividness with their captured subjects, commanding faith for a kind of ontological privilege that is lacking and unrivaled in previous forms of archival media. With the continuous cranking of the machine that triggers the rolling of the celluloid film loaded inside, an artificial memory is created: time regained, time conquered.

### Recording Objectivity

Recording technologies, such as photography, phonograph and cinema, transcribe the like-ness of an occurrence in life, then store and represent it as reproducible data via technical means. Before the 19th century, no recording technology of any kind existed practically. No individual, whether a king or a layman, prior to this time has the privilege of re-experiencing a time that is passed through external means. What is "bygone is bygone" and can no

longer be retained and resurrected experientially in any external form. Of course, there are media like writing and painting that provide references or records of the past before the arrival of recording technologies. However, these media fall short in their ability to render objectivity in making records. By contrast, the new modern recording technology of the 19th century provides a kind of mechanical objectivity, which in turn commands a sort of faith in its indexical authenticity that is lacking in older forms of archival media such as painting and writing. This idea of mechanical objectivity echoes with Andre Bazin's realist film theory, in which he based his theoretical framework on the ground of cinema's "thing-ness", and its ability to render life automatically and objectively. Contrasting the mechanical nature of cinema with the "inescapable subjectivity" that is inherent in medium like painting, Bazin asserted,

"For the first time, between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a nonliving agent. For the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man."<sup>3</sup>

It is perhaps debatable whether Bazin's theoretical conception of the ontological privilege of the photographic image in cinema, and by extension its objectivity, is a valid argument. But one thing though is for sure: recording technology of the modern age offers a new kind of modality of experiencing the past and conviction in media representation that are considerably different from previous forms of representational and archival media. And these new modality and faith will contribute to form the modern sensibility that underlain and informed our contemporary experience of time, history and memory.

### The Anxiety of Forgetting

Modern recording technology not only provides innovative ways and standards for conservation and archive; it also opens up new ways of experiencing time and memory. With the aid

of recording technologies, memories are no longer experienced simply as transitory singularities contingent and confined to the subjective mental realm but also as repeatable and reproducible dreams mediated by technical means that can be copied, shared and transacted. Meanwhile, with the ability to preserve and replay time in a mediated virtual form, the sense and experience of time becomes radically different from before. Cinema, like the Egyptian terra cotta statuettes, functions as "the preservation of life by a representation of life"<sup>4</sup>. Cinema suspends and preserves time in its sweet cryonic dreams not only for archival, artistic or intellectual purposes, but it also aspires to serve as a symbol for human to transgress the natural boundary of life and death, a dream and vision that will find its echo in life-extension and cryonic technology in the 21st century. Seeing from this light, the craze of recording technology in the 19th century is both a call answering to the age-old human dream of mummification of time/life as well as a cultural response to the need in constructing a modern temporality that prepared for a new era of rapid changes and social development.

The 19th century brought forth changes (e.g. urbanisation, colonialism and development in modern transportation) that were accelerated at a rate that was increasingly beyond the threshold that human beings can grasp, comprehend and retain. Forgetfulness thus becomes a by-product for an era that prided changes and speed, as human memory can no longer keep up with the vast amount of changes and information that came to associate with these rapid developments. Rapid social changes thus induced an anxiety with this new modern temporality. These forgetfulness and anxiety inevitably lead to a growing need and urge for preservation both on a personal and social level. In the midst of rapid historical changes that were beyond the control of any single individual or nation, the only counter measure to personal and cultural amnesia is to make records of things past. To record and archive is the last resort one can perform to "deter" time, an act that serves to preserve life amongst changes and evanescence. Recording technology is hence a form of memory machine that serves to defy the fleeting nature of time, allowing traces to be made and kept amongst the ruins of time.

Forgetfulness, a problem that is highlighted and intensified by a century of rapid growth and change, becomes a drive behind the need to preserve, archive and record in the face of a fast changing reality. It is therefore not surprising that photography, phonography and cinema, the three pioneering recording technologies that came to define the modern media experience, were all "invented" in the 19th century. By the same token, it is

no coincidence that H. G. Wells' sci-fi classic *The Time Machine* the quintessential literary work on time travel, was published in 1895, the same year of cinema's mythical beginning as drawn and founded by conventional film history. What ties practical recording technologies and Wells' fictitious invention together is a fantasy and aspiration shared by both, that is, to defy the nature of time through the deployment of modern technology.

### Cinema as Time Machine

Cinema is often being heralded as a time machine. A time machine is as much about travelling as about archiving (as shown by the simple fact that Apple has adopted the very same name for its Macintosh OS data backup system). If the poetic metaphor of "cinema as time machine" is to be taken seriously and meaningfully, then we have to understand cinema as both a form of virtual voyage as well as a form of memory machine, a system that register, record and reanimate information in a dynamic process that involves the past, present and future.

In this exhibition, we will explore the idea of cinema as **memory prosthetics** and **time machine** via the works by three international artists and unit: Polymorf (The Netherlands), Verena Friedrich (Germany) and Phil Solomon (USA). Through their works, we want to explore how the notion and function of temporality and memory evolved with the rise of modern technology and how artists create symbols and narratives to confront history, time and human finitude.



3 Andre Bazin, "The Ontology of Photographic Image", What is Cinema?, Berkeley & Los Angeles, California, University of California Press, 1967, p.13.

4 Ditto, p.10.