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The nostalgic
revolution of
CHEN WEI

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维旧
革命

AND FEATURING
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CHEN WEI

Interview by Mian Mian

Reminiscent of the liberating revolution of early club culture in China, a series of carefully orchestrated photographs reproduces the dream-like atmosphere of midnight, when dance halls are a form of society and togetherness is love.

MM One of your recent projects suggests that Paul Oakenfold, Guinness record holder for “most successful DJ in the world,” says he would like to use your artwork as the cover art for his new album. Confronted with this invented scenario, I feel the project is about the mutual impact the fictional and real have upon each other.

CW My series “In the Waves” is in fact purely fictional. Everything, including the documents I produced after the exhibition about clubs, entertainment and disco, was fabricated. So perhaps if something like this actually happened, where the fictional and real were forced into relation...

MM For example, we could get one of the “actors” from your piece into Paul Oakenfold’s real party!

CW Fictional and reality are both structures—that is to say, two systems with a countless variety of connections. If we toss a so-called fictional thing into a real setting, forcing them into relation—like putting those zombie-like figures from one of my pieces into an actual club—what would be the chemical reaction? What changes might we observe? It’s a very interesting question.

MM There was time when I was continuously being called into negotiations regarding how to steal back “music playing rights” from bosses of clubs that don’t care about music. You’d hear stories about a prominent DJ who’d been forced to work as a guard at a parking garage. In a word, everything had changed. But there were still bright spots. For instance, India has this place known as Goa. Everyone carries sound equipment and water up to the top of a mountain and then has a party. This is where Goa trance music originated. That spirit of peace and love can still be found in legendary DJs like Oakenfold. We also had this quality when we first started making dance parties in China. I’ve seen that feeling in your works, too—that brilliance, that expression of figures in some kind of dream. But your works also seem to carry a sense of sorrow and longing, a kind of nostalgia.

CW I feel like this is a very interesting proposition—within greater societal evolutions, what place does this specific cultural movement occupy? This is where I take a lot of interest. As I’m in the act of creation, even to this day, this culture oftentimes leaves me with a sense of loss. Club

陈维
文/棉棉

唤起对早期中国夜店文化解放式革命的回忆，陈维的摄影作品系列精心再现了午夜的迷离——舞池是社会的缩影，亲密是爱的表白。

MM: Paul Oakenfold这个吉尼斯纪录中“可能是世界上最成功的DJ”说，希望用你的作品来作新专辑的封面。当我想到这件事情的时候，我觉得它不是一个艺术家和流行明星彼此跨界的项目，它更多的是关于所谓的虚构和现实如何互相起作用的——这个部分我更感兴趣。

CW：我做的《在浪里》（In the Waves）这个系列确实是纯虚构的。所有的包括我展览之后做的一些文献，关于夜店、关于音乐、关于DISCO的文献也都是虚构的。所以如果中间发生这样一件事情，让这些虚构的跟非常现实的联系起来的话……

MM：比如，我们可以把你作品里的“演员”放到Paul Oakenfold真实的派对里去……

CW：如果真的把一个我们所谓的虚构的东西扔到一个我们所谓真实的场域里去——它们本身像两个系统，或者说系统之间总是有着千丝万缕的联系——让他们真的在一起时，比如把我的作品里那些像僵尸一样的人物放到真实的夜店里去的时候，会发生什么化学反应？或者是我们看他们有什么变化，我们事先也许会有一些设置，这些设置可以让这些发生更有效、可明显。

MM：前阵子有几天，我连着被叫去商量如何重新把“放音乐的权力”从那些不在乎音乐的夜店老板手里抢回来。当时我还听说一位当年不错的DJ，现在在停车场看车的事情。总之，一切都变了。印度曾经有一个叫GOA的地方，大家都分头背着音响和水爬很长时间山到达山顶后开派对——Goa trance就是这么出来的。那种和平与爱的精神现在还可以在Oakenfold这样的传奇DJ身上看见，这也是我们当年在中国开始制作跳舞派对时所具有的品质，那种感觉我在你的作品里也看见了，那种光，那种人物的梦幻的表情，但你的作品更多的是一种忧伤和追忆，一种怀旧。

CW：其实我在做作品的过程中，看了很多资料，也有我自己的经验。我觉得这是一个很有意思的命题——这个文化在整个社会的变化中，现在的位置在哪里？这是我比较关注的。你前面讲的那个爬到山顶的事儿，有这样经历的或经历过那个年代有一点记忆的话，当你讲到这个事儿的时候都能感觉到那种温

culture at the time (in China) was very elitist. It was about revolution. It was about liberation. Now, there's more people involved, and all those aspects are changing, just like that former DJ you mentioned earlier. Sometimes, when I'm alone in my studio and my mind begins to wander, I try to see this situation in its entirety—as if I could see the trajectory and speed of more than twenty years of societal changes. You can, indeed, feel this. I have a terrible sense of loss regarding that time. So why did I pursue this “late night dance” theme? Really, I believe dance halls are the best spaces because they're like microcosms. We leave our daily lives behind for this self-contained underground environment. Dance halls have a very complete structure, like a society. Anything can happen there, which lends itself to many routes of discussion.

MM Chinese education lacks love, communication and dance, so club culture in China during its earliest formation really was a revolution. Of course, that all changed. After I decided to stop producing dance parties, I said something like, “We invented a new illness, and years later, other people will call it culture.” Regarding your works, what I'm interested in is the kind of deliberation you went through in creating the emotions for the “figures” dancing in the club. Take Paul Oakenfold, for example—he's very amicable and doesn't necessarily care about our discussions of “fiction.” He has an ability to make thousands of people begin dancing immediately. I think that comes from love. It is founded in a celebration of life. Your works, on the other hand, seem to come from a perspective where the light is fading. If we can say club culture in those years was just dawning, what I gather from “In the Waves” is that it's waning.

CW One at sunrise, one at sunset. I think this metaphor is quite accurate. Going back to our “fiction” topic, I was recently organizing some materials and acquired some new insight into this matter. For me, only “fiction” counts as mid-night culture, the core of club culture.

MM Do you think the characters in your pieces are happy? When you're picking the final photographs, you're still really expressing your own inner world. Club culture is simply your material. Just like my teacher said, the fictional world in your heart exists inasmuch as it emerges. You've spent so much energy making everyone wear the clothes you picked and adjusting the lighting, but what's expressed is your inner world. That's why, when I first saw your works, I was immediately drawn in. At the time, I was with the former director of Art Basel, Samuel Keller, seeing your solo exhibition at Chi K11 Art Museum. We both loved your spatial installations—the cloakroom and dancefloor. He said you give the viewer a sense of nostalgia. I think this word is quite beautiful, at least in its English context. In researching this project, did you feel you loved what you saw in club culture?

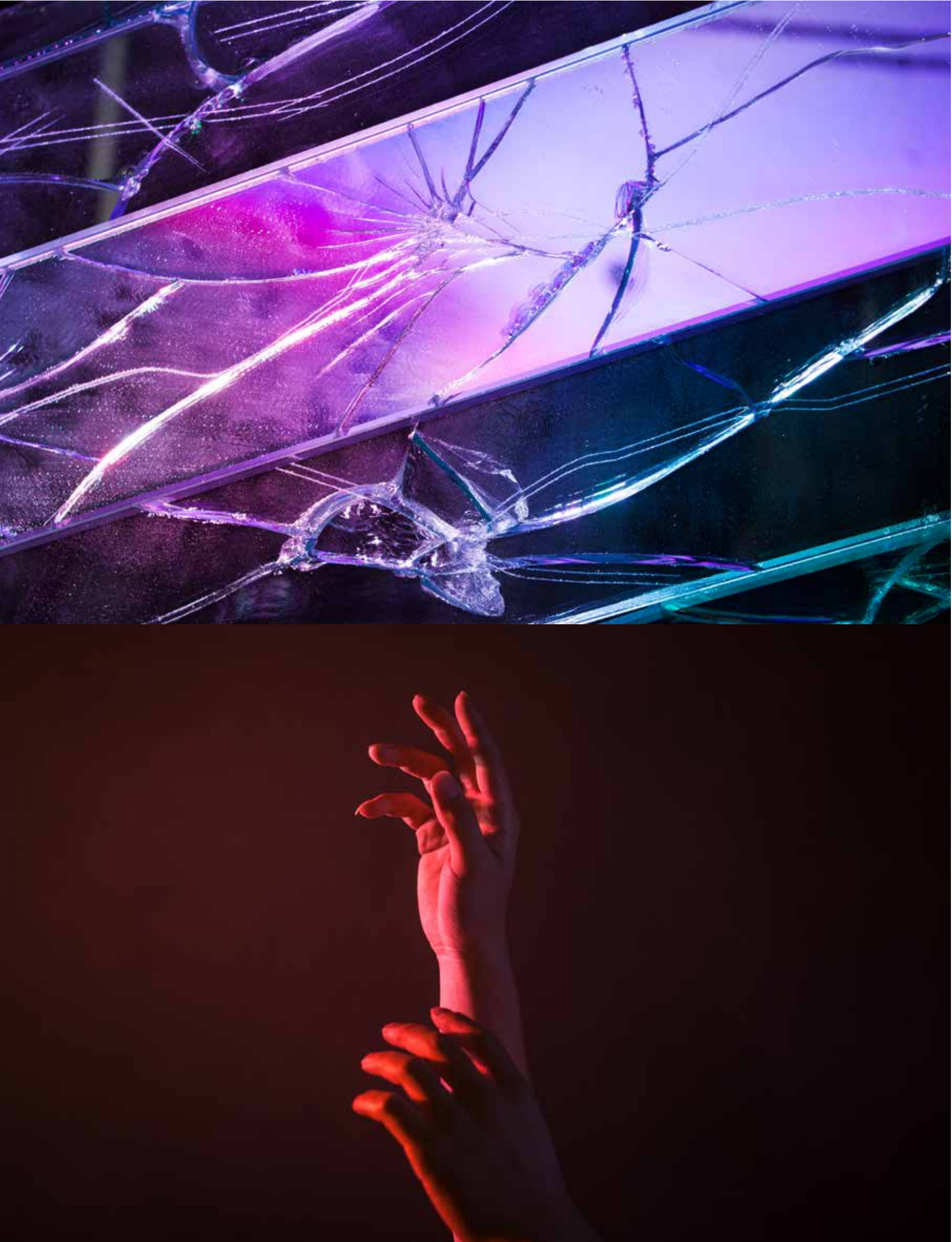
度，能闻到那种味道。我在创作时觉得，这个文化到现在很多时候会让我有一种失落感。夜店文化当时在中国是比较精英的，它跟革命有关，跟解放有关，而现在，人的数量在变大，所有的事情也都在变化，就像你前面讲到的那位原先的DJ现在的处境……其实有时候我会一个人在工作室里胡思乱想，会把这个事情放大去想——好像可以看到整个二十多年社会变化的轨迹和速度，你甚至都能感觉到这些，其实我有一个巨大的失落感在那边……为什么要做跳舞、夜晚的主题？其实当时对我来说舞厅是一个最好的空间，因为它像一个小型的世界，我们走出了日常生活，然后就可以到一个地下的舞厅。舞厅有一个非常完整的类似于社会的结构，它可以发生很多事情，延展出很多可以讨论的东西。

MM：中国的教育严重缺乏爱、沟通和跳舞的教育。所以夜店文化在中国最早的时候真的是一种革命。后来就变了，在我后来决定停止制作跳舞派对的时候，我说了这样一句话：我们发明了一种病毒，很多年后，别人会叫它文化。我给你发一首歌凉快一下啊，以后我们都去月亮呈现出蓝色的那一时空，把看过你作品的人都一起飞过去，为了自由和真爱。（棉棉给陈维发送了一首歌曲）对你的作品，我感兴趣的是，你通过了怎样的分析和观察，来创造了你的“人物”在夜店跳舞时的情绪？就拿Paul Oakenfold来说，他很阳光，他完全不管我们讨论的虚构是什么。他有那种能力可以立刻让成千上万的人开始跳舞。我觉得那是一种爱的能力，它是以庆祝生命为基础的。而你作品中的情绪更像是来自落日的观点——落日的憧憬是以恐惧为基础的。如果说我们当年的夜店文化是日出的话，我在你的《在浪里》里看到的是日落。

CW：一个日落，一个日出。我觉得这个比喻挺准确的。说回“虚构”这个话题，我最近在整理资料的时候，有了一些新的看法。对我来说，“虚构”才是夜店文化的核心。

MM：那你觉得你作品里的那些人物是快乐的吗？你在最后挑选照片的时候，其实你在表达的还是你的内心世界，夜店文化只是你的材料。就像我的师父说的，虚构在心的世界存在。存在即是发生。你费了那么多劲儿，让大家穿上你要求的衣服，打上光，弄出那么多动静，但是表达的是你的内心，这也是为什么我看到你的作品一下子就感觉被链接了。当时我跟巴塞尔艺博会的前总监Samuel Keller一起去看你在K11 chi美术馆的个展，我们都很喜欢你做的这些空间装置——衣帽间、舞池——他说你给我们带来了一种怀旧感，我觉得nostalgia在英文里是一个很美的词。在创作的研究过程中，你想到过爱这个内容吗，关于夜店文化？

CW：前面你说到怀旧，那个美妙的英文单词，在中文里的“怀旧”可能更多是沉溺于旧时光，或者是迷恋。





CW You mentioned nostalgia before, this beautiful English word, but in its Chinese context, “nostalgia” seems more like indulging in some bygone era or obsessing over something. I don’t think nostalgia is just these things, though. It can be translated in many different ways and can touch on many different things. Returning to the “fiction” aspect of club culture, midnight itself is a fiction. All dance halls tend to disappear, which is why I use midnight, and why I use the club as the basic framework to produce this exhibition. Of course, what I’m talking about isn’t simply limited to these things, but the reason I use it is that in my view, it’s just like you said: fiction has power! We use all of these visual methods to fictionalize it. This is an extremely powerful thing.

MM For me, I really don’t analyze it; I am entirely brought into the fiction. But the feeling I love is that intesity! Art and writing have never given me that feeling of love and freedom I experience when I’m dancing to one of my favorite DJ’s. So recently I’ve been trying to figure out why. I’ve even been thinking I should start making parties again, because everyone has forgotten joy and pleasure, and the dancefloor is the most powerful material I have to work with.

CW Just like what you said, all of this work is not solely about club culture. Maybe it’s more about my situation. So let’s avoid meaningless postulations and talk about our personal existences instead, our personal feelings about life. Why use “In the Waves”? It’s too indefinite, too unsafe. It has too many things to think and speculate on. You don’t know where to begin.

MM Very youthful and very nostalgic.

CW I feel love is, of course, very, very important. So many people, in the dark of night, go to a place to do this thing together, to share in this moment. If we look at it from an ideological, political perspective, though, we could say that’s very complicated. Dance is a great way to bring everyone together, and in other cases, when so many people come together, there can be problems. So I believe this “togetherness” is itself love. I think you were right about that. It makes me think about the time that you, Paul and I were talking. You asked me what impetus drove me to make this project. At the time, I said it was “tragic”—it captivated me, sucked me in, made me want to see the culture clearly. It’s really about this tragic quality, and youth sometimes carries tragedy within. 👁

Chen Wei (Chinese, b. 1980) is an artist who lives and works in Beijing. He is represented by Leo Xu Projects, Shanghai; 10 Chancery Lane Gallery, Hong Kong; Ben Brown Fine Arts, Hong Kong/London; Galerie Ruediger Schoettle, München; and White Rabbit Gallery, Sydney. His solo show “Noon Club” will be presented at JNBY Foundation, Hangzhou, from 27 March–14 May.

Mian Mian is a writer, actress and nightlife promoter who lives and works in Shanghai. She is primarily known for her first novel, *Candy*, and the movie *Shanghai Panic*, based on her novel *We Are Panic*.

但我觉得怀旧不仅仅是这些， 它有更多的释义和可以延展的东西。我们说回刚才夜店文化里的“虚构”， 午夜本身就是虚构的，所有的舞厅要趋向于消失，就是为什么我要用午夜， 为什么要用夜店来作为我这个展览整个创作的基础框架。当然我讲的不仅仅是这些，但我为什么要用它， 我的想法就像你说的“虚构是有力量的！”， 我们用这样形象化的方法去虚构它，我们要奔向它， 或者它将带领我们抵达一个地方，我们可能最后抵达不了， 因为它是虚构的，不实际的，这里就有一个非常有力量的东西，就像有一个青春期的孩子突然站到你面前说你这样不行你那样不行，我们会觉得他非常可笑， 但这就是有力量的东西， 我的语言有时讲得不是很清楚……

MM: 对我来说，我完全没有分析，完全地进入了那个虚构，但是爱的感觉是那般强烈！那么多年过去以后的今天，艺术、写作从未给我那般爱与自由的感觉——当我在我喜欢的DJ的音乐里跳舞的时候！所以，最近我一直在想这是为什么，我甚至在想其实我应该重新开始做派对，因为大家似乎都忘了joy和pleasure，而舞池可能在此时是我最有力量的材料。

CW: 就像你说的，所有做的这些并不是在讲夜店文化，可能是在讲我的状态……我们不会讲“假大空”的事情，我们讲我们自己生存的状态，自己对生活的感受。为什么会用“在浪里”，可能有太多不确定性，有太多不安全感，有太多没有办法去琢磨揣测的东西，你不知道要向何处。

MM: 非常青春，也非常nostalgic。

CW: 我觉得爱当然是非常非常重要的。为什么我们要想方设法，这么多人，在天黑的时候去到一个地方，去一起做一件事情，去度过一些时光。如果从比较意识形态、比较政治的方面去讲，这可以说是非常难的，因为跳舞是一个很好又很合理的把大家聚集在一起的方法，而通常太多人聚集在一起总是会有这样那样的麻烦。所以，我觉得这个“聚集”本身就是爱嘛！我觉得你这句说得很好，我觉得这让我想起来我、你和PAUL三个一起聊天时，你问我是什么让我做这个项目，我当时有讲过是“悲剧性”——让我非常着迷让我这么想去靠近它这么想要看清它（夜店文化）的，是因为它的悲剧性。而青春，有时里面就带着这种悲剧性。

陈维，1980年生于中国。现居北京。Leo Xu Projects（上海）、10号赞善里画廊（香港）、Ben Brown Fine Arts画廊（香港/伦敦）、Galerie Ruediger Schoettle画廊（慕尼黑）和白兔画廊（悉尼）合作艺术家。个展《Noon Club》将于3月27日至5月14日在江南布衣基金会（杭州）展出。

绵绵，作家、演员、夜生活爱好者。现居上海。以小说《糖》、《我们害怕》以及同名电影为人所知。

