



Curatorial Statement

The word Magick, an archaic spelling of Magic, was popularized in the late Renaissance, when Italian humanists first conceived the idea of exploiting natural sciences and phenomena for the performance of magic. An exemplar of this movement was Giambattista della Porta's 1558 treatise *Magia Naturalis* (Natural Magick), which was widely circulated and republished in 5 different languages in less than a decade.

In the book, Magick is a performing art in which acts, tricks or illusions of seemingly impossible feats are deployed utilizing natural forces. Magicians are defined as people who are skilled in drawing out the 'intimate essence which lurks in the inmost bowels of things, to fetch it forth, and sublimate it.' With carefully planned actions, together with the cooperation of physics, chemistry and precise arrangements in a staged environment, the magician's seamless performance challenges our belief system, leading to a proposed change, convincing the audience of impossible possibilities.

In a similar manner, artists constantly highlight sets of experiences taken from their daily lives and re-stage them in a creative and personal language, re-interpreting the amazing world around us with their insights. Artists take viewers into a realm of fantasy that is both factual and fictitious. Sometimes it even borders on the supernatural as it stimulates sensations and affects that evaded our normal perception and awareness. As such, artists inspire us to reflect and think beyond our current existence.

Anonymous Society for Magick is a mixed-media exhibition of five visual artists. While magic alludes to illusion, fantasy, and mind tricks, inspiring us about something that could not possibly have happened, this exhibition features artists' works that show us what could have happened, with the same vigor, planning, and precision required to deliver a magical performance.

The Great Escape is a newly commissioned work for this exhibition. Negotiating between the media of painting, video and installation, Lam Tung Pang's new work is an inquisitive imagination of a carousel lantern. Inspired by one of the essays in Shuji Terayama's (1935-1983) *Fantasy Library*, in which the author was mesmerized by the street magician Harry Houdini (1874-1926), whose skillful Magic threatened our belief system and concept of reality. However, once it is staged, it simply becomes an entertainment. The miracle stays on the stage and remains separated from our daily logic. Lam's urge to flee into ruminating images is a humanistic response to his own fleeting surroundings, interrogating the viability of our city's complex realities.

Chen Wei constructs meticulously staged scenes that either capture or mimic specific moments in reality, telling a story of the social reality in contemporary China, presenting it as photographs and installation. Exposing the collective



psychology of contemporary Chinese citizens, they share the mutual desire of betterment individually and nationally. This materialism has resulted in a huge abundance of non-degradable consumer products left in the city, which are usually left neglected and remained as they are. Chen reimagines such found objects and, through careful reconstruction, builds a new scene resembling common dreams, finding a place within our memory, creating fiction from true stories. Perhaps, like the theatrical lights and props in a magic stage, the materialist façade of a prosperous economy creates tactics of diversion from ideological struggles to the other social strife in contemporary China.

For many, the transformative power of art and of the artistic process are forms of magic. The repetitive rhythm of a certain action, producing an almost meditative state in the artist's mind, is an essential element of many artistic practices. Hao Jingban's newly produced video, *Opus One*, follows a young Chinese couple's obsession to master the Swing Dance, a form of social dancing which was most popular in the 30s and the 50s among the black community in the United States. The video takes us on a journey of discovery, spanning historic archival footages, the couple's strenuous effort to practice, and their field trip to Harlem, New York City, to experience the place where jazz began. Could the strive for originality bring the two distinct cultures and eras together? Through perseverance, hard work, and obsessively repetitive practice, the young Chinese couple achieve a faultless performance with pin-point accuracy, successfully keeping their 'magic' alive and believable.

Wang Tuo recently produced a series of video works based in the Northeast China where he was born. The video work selected for this exhibition, *Symptomatic Silence of Complicit Forgetting*, shows a complex relationship between the present and the historical past; natural and supernatural beings; and states of existence. Time and spaces interweave in a non-linear way that slowly reveals a series of unhealable acts in history, during the Cultural Revolution, events that had created various kinds of unrelievable pressures that are still experienced to date. Wang uses moving image as a means to create an illusionary and dreamy alternative reality where some of these pressures can be relieved. Like a magic show, it provides a psychological escape for the audience who wants to believe through other means.

Trevor Yeung's practice ranges from still images and sculptures, to large site-specific installations. Obsessed with structure and system, his works are often inspired by personal experiences and inter-personal encounters, exploring issues such as personal and social anxiety and the human condition. By creating controlled environments with horticulture elements, he invites the audience to encounter carefully orchestrated scenes exactly as he wanted, just as a magician would. Requiring the viewers to navigate the scenes physically and mentally, these precisely planned situations come from the same desire as studying Magick back in the days – to better understand the world around us.

Historically, magic has been conceived as the desire to use invisible forces to change the visible world. The link between art and magic displays the hidden rules of nature, investigates the visible world, and showcases the realm of dreams and desires. Against the complexity of social reality, "Anonymous Society for Magick" summons amazement whilst simultaneously revealing the immanent truth within our surroundings.

煉法社

策展陳述

譯：李挽靈

「Magick」一詞是「Magic」的古老拼寫，在文藝復興後期很流行，當時意大利人文主義者首次提出了利用自然科學和現象進行魔術表演的想法。吉安巴蒂斯塔·德拉·波爾塔的 1558 年著作《Magia Naturalis》就是這運動的典範，不出十年，它已以五種語言被廣泛發行及再版。

在這本部著作中，Magick 是一門表演藝術，透過利用自然力量，部署看似不可能的表演、戲法或幻覺等壯舉。魔術師被定義為熟練於掌握「潛藏在事物最深處的私密本質，將之提取並昇華」的人。通過精心策劃的行為，配合物理、化學和精確的部署，在一個經刻意佈置的環境中，魔術師天衣無縫的表演挑戰了我們的信仰體系，帶出改變的擬議，從而說服觀眾相信不可能的可能性。

同樣地，藝術家不斷強調他們日常生活中的各種經歷，以創造性及個人化的語言將之重新佈置，並以自己的見解重新詮釋我們周圍的神奇世界。藝術家將觀眾帶入既真實亦虛構的幻想國境。他們有時甚至與超自然接壤，激發平常的感知和意識所未能偵測的觀感。由此，藝術家啟發我們反思和思考超越當前的存在。

“煉法社”是由五位視覺藝術家組成的混合媒體展覽。魔術暗示了幻覺、幻想和控心術，啟發我們一些不可能發生的事情，而是次展覽展出的藝術家作品，則以進行魔術表演同等的活力、計劃和精確度，向我們展示了可能發生的事情。

《大逃亡》是為此次展覽特別委託的作品。林東鵬的這件新作品在繪畫、錄像和裝置等媒體之間協商，是對旋轉木馬燈籠的好奇想像。受到寺山修司《幻想圖書館》（1935–1983年）中一篇散文的啟發，文中描寫作者被街頭魔術師哈利·胡迪尼（1874–1926年）所迷惑，其爐火純青的魔術威脅到我們的信仰體系及現實的概念。但一旦上演，它就變成一種娛樂，奇蹟停留在舞台上，並與我們的邏輯思維分隔。林想要逃往讓人墮入沉思的圖像的衝動，是對自己瞬息萬變的環境的人文回應，質疑這城市複雜現實的可行性。

陳維精心打造的場景或捕捉或模仿現實中的特定時刻，講述當代中國社會現實的故事，並以照片和裝置形式呈現。作品揭露了當代中國公民的集體心理，他們在個人和國家層面共同的進步願望。這種物質主義導致大量無法



分解的消費品殘留於城市，通常被忽視並維持其原貌。陳的照片重新利用了這些拾得物，並經過仔細的重構，建立了一個類似於尋常夢境的新場景，在我們的記憶中找到其位置，並根據真實的事跡創作了虛構的故事。也許就像魔術舞台上的舞台燈光和道具一樣，那是繁榮和物質主義經濟的表象，當中包含了轉移的策略：將焦點從意識形態的鬥爭轉移至其他當代中國社會的紛亂中。

對於許多人來說，藝術和藝術過程的變革力量是魔術的一種。某動作重複的節奏，產生一種藝術家腦裡近乎冥想的狀態，是很多藝術家的實踐的基本要素。郝敬班的最新錄像作品《Opus One》追訪一對年輕中國男女掌握搖擺舞（一種活躍於 1930 年代和 50 年代的社交舞形式，由紐約哈林區的非裔美國人帶起潮流）的狂熱追求。錄像帶我們走上了一次探索之旅，從歷史檔案錄像，到二人練習的艱苦努力，再造訪紐約市哈林區的實地考察，體驗爵士樂的發源地。對原創性的追求能否將兩種截然不同的文化和時代融合在一起？通過堅持不懈、辛勤努力和強迫性的重複練習，這對年輕中國男女達成了完美無瑕的表演，維持了精度的準確性，成功讓他們的「魔術」保持活力而可信。

王拓最近在他出生的中國東北製作了一系列錄像作品。是次展覽挑選的錄像作品《共謀性失憶》展示了現在與歷史過去、自然與超自然生物、不同存在狀態之間的複雜關係。時間和空間以一種非線性的方式交織在一起，緩慢地揭示了文革歷史上一系列無法治癒的行為，這些事件造成了至今仍然被經歷的各種無法緩解的壓力。王以流動影像為手段，創建一種虛幻與夢幻的另類現實，使其中一些壓力得以緩解。就像魔術表演一樣，作品為希望相信另類現實的人們提供了心理上的逃避。

楊沛鏗的實踐涵蓋靜止圖像、雕塑到大型場域特定裝置。他沉迷於結構和系統，作品常受個人經歷和人際間的交往所啟發，探索諸如個人和社會焦慮，以及人的狀態等問題。通過植物營造一個受控的環境，藝術家如同魔術師般，邀請觀眾與他精心策劃的場景相遇。觀眾的身心於場景裡導航，這些精確計劃的情況跟過去人們學習魔術源自同一種欲望——以求更了解我們周遭的世界。

歷史上，魔術被看成是人們使用無形力量改變可見世界的願望。從哲學的角度來看，藝術與魔術之間的關聯，顯現了自然的隱藏法則，研究可見的世界，並展示夢想和慾望的境界。在這種多層次的背景下，展覽將如夢似幻的理想世界與社會現實的殘酷交織在一起，引發驚奇之餘，同時揭示我們周圍環境的內在真相。