

Absurdity and Straying Ordinarity

By Hai Jie

Zhang Xiao's works are brief and intensive. He seldom gazes and just presses the shutter quickly. In a short moment he illuminates the central part with the flashlight, and with the surrounding black corners, a charming, dreamy, odd and gorgeously vulgar stage comes into shape. He watches them play theatre of absurdity in the real daily life.

As the moment photographer Zhang Xiao presses the shutter, his relationship with the world is settled: he is destined to face the surreal, odd, colorful part of this desolate express, and break up with the opposite side – the disguised dazzling part. This is the real depiction of what he has experienced.

Does the fact that reality is turned into image imply the existence of absurdity? Or is this absurdity just a signal showing the existence of the ignored daily routines? Or just a strange effect out of the course when the processed and photographed reality links up with images? Anyhow, when we watch photographer Zhang Xiao's work "They", we can always find ourselves in a surreal environment. Zhang Xiao photographed these scenes just in the right time, avoided what has been exaggerated and refined in ordinary reports, and faced up to the rough first scenes.

Among Chinese photographers, Zhang Xiao is a man who noticed the ambitions, interests and behavioral features of Jack-a-Lents in an earlier time, and he has the photographic talent to precisely turn these behavioral features into images. By spontaneously eliminating the depression and graveness in the character of Chinese people, in the works he let them find joy in the daily triviality and get-together, consuming their excess energy into joining in the fun, accompanying the riches in pastime, and being watched. It seems to be interesting when people leave where they usually stay and go to parks or other gathering places, they will show some vague emptiness and alienation and occasionally a kind of danger of delirium– we can call it Straying Ordinarity, which seems to be more obvious in Zhang Xiao's "They". Through his later work "Coastline", which earned him fame, we can see that his visual recognition for rock-bottom routines has been already accomplished in "They".

In addition, the unknowns and uncertainties brought by the innate defective structure of the Holga cameras also arise Zhang Xiao's expectation and fantasy. When this special material feature is blended with Zhang Xiao's works, the function for daily view gets enlarged; it makes all the photos surge fiercely just like a sandstorm containing dim flavors. With scenes turning into stages, the photographed objects come out of their daily life and social status, and begin to perform without being alert – but this performance is still part of self-reflecting. The expired films enhanced the aberration of picture, and hypnotize the photographed objects and the viewers until they come to an odd state of sleepwalking. They've long separated from the alert selves in the social orders.

Please allow me to end this passage with a sentence of French existentialism philosopher Camus on the features of absurdity: "Man will feel like an outlander and a stranger in a universe where illusions and lights are deprived suddenly. Now that he's deprived the memory of lost homeland or the hope for promised paradise, his exile is irreversible. This separation between life and actors, and between actors and scenes is a feeling of absurd."

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荒诞以及走失的日常性

文/海杰

张晓的作品是短促而集中的，他少有凝视，并迅速按下快门，在稍纵即逝的时间缝隙里，他用闪光灯打亮了中心部分，暗角四面围上，妩媚、梦幻、怪异而艳俗的舞台便已落成，他看着他们在这舞台之上，上演日常现实里的荒诞剧。

在摄影师张晓按下快门的那时候，就意味着他与世界的关系已经确定：他必然要面对这辆荒凉快车里超现实的离奇的炫彩部分，并和与之相对的伪装的耀眼部分做出决裂。这是他感同身受的现实写真。

是不是现实变身为影像，本身就意味着荒诞性的存在？抑或是这荒诞是一种被忽视的日常在被观看时所发出的存在信号？再或是经过处理和映照的现实与影像对接过程中产生的陌生化效果？总之，我们在看摄影师张晓的作品《他们》时，无时不刻都处在一个超现实的语境之中。张晓很及时恰当地拍下这些场面，并避开常规报道里被夸大和提炼的事件，直面粗糙的第一现场。

张晓是国内摄影师中较早意识到小人物的志趣、行为特征，并拥有将这种行为特征精确地转译为影像才华的人，这个成长于网络的摄影师并没有沉迷于闲情或偶发的小情趣，而是提起钝刀，迎风挥舞。他在作品里自发地间离了那些国民性中的阴霾与低沉，放任他们在日常琐碎和扎堆中寻找欢乐，将他们平日里不多见的剩余的旺盛精力挥洒到凑热闹、帮闲以及被观赏中去。这似乎是一个有趣的事情，当人们离开日常的生活场所，而奔向公园或其他聚集地时，会释放出暧昧不明的无意识和疏离感，并偶尔散发出某种澹妄的危险性，我们不妨将其称之为“走失的日常性”。这在张晓的作品《他们》中似乎更为明显，从他后来的成名作《海岸线》的延续中我们可以意识到，这种对于底层日常性的视觉识别在《他们》中就已经完成。

另外，Holga 相机先天缺陷的机器构造给拍摄带来未知和不确定性，同时也提起了张晓的期待和幻想。这种特殊的材料属性，纳入到张晓的作品中来，便是放大了日常的可看性，让所有的照片如同挟裹着昏暗气息的沙尘暴一般的粗粝涌动。现场成为舞台，被摄体从日常的生活起居和社会身份中走出来，进入不设防的表演状态中来，只是这表演依然是自我映照的一部分。过期胶卷加重了画面迷乱的部分，为被摄体和观看者催眠，直到进入梦游的荒诞状态。他们与社会秩序中那个警觉的自我早已分离。

我不妨援引法国存在主义哲学家加缪曾就荒诞的特征说过的一句话来做本文的结束：“在一个突然被剥夺掉幻象与光亮的宇宙里，人觉得自己是一个外人、一个异乡人，既然他被剥夺了对失去家园的记忆或对自己承诺之乐土的希望，他的放逐是不可挽回了。这种人与生命以及演员与场景的分离就是荒诞的情感。”

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