

Negative Positive Static Projections Installation

詩意影像的政治性賞玩  
曼塔隆 (Ohad Matalon) 的「北之實，南之明」

文、圖 | 蔡家樺

我知道，為了誘導你，為了使你信賴，我必須歌唱，  
就算你將耳朵藏在石縫後，我仍舊要引吭高歌，  
冶金之痛無誤地噴噴著玉米果核中的那顆種子，  
而我必須以我的臂膀將這顆金色的種子藏進你嘴裡。

——比歐-菲可 (Dan Beachy-Quick)《北之實，南之明》(North True, South Bright)

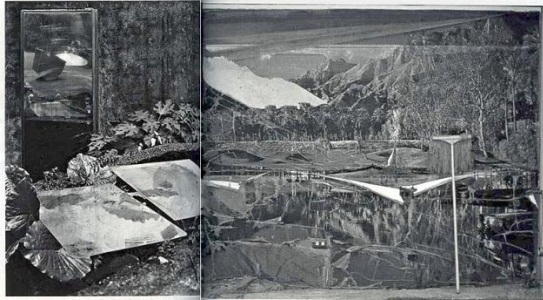
比歐-菲可的詩集《北之實，南之明》中，感性語彙字字珠璣地揭示理想意識的存在，若從自我個體一直以來在感性與理性二元之兩端之間擺盪，以謀求主體認同的定位，倒不如說此二元性其實是影像所構成的表象現象，與一切虛光在作用，其實什麼都沒有真實，而光的真實指向是「無」；換言之，橫置於二元性之間 (in-between) 的狀態，便是觀看主體如何從存在著「有」主體影像的真實，過渡至「無」影像主體存在的「空」狀態中，且又如何從「空」、「無」之中看見真正的存在樣態。而與此詩集同名的曼塔隆 (Ohad Matalon) 2010 年影展，也表現出極為類似的思維：以詩意的影像語言抒寫著自我主體的理性存在意識，然而觀看與被觀的媒體性卻又層層解離觀看個體的主體性，並且倒置觀看的主客體關係，因此可說曼塔隆此次影展表現的不僅只是個體內部視野 (vision) 的外部化展示，亦是透過外部媒體性，提出一種觀者的內部政治性批判，影像現場所形塑的抒情氣氛中，實則洋溢著激進 (radical) 的美學政治革命氣味。

詩意影像的政治性：去影像

此次影展大量呈現曼塔隆旅行以色列、台灣、德國、奧地利等地拍攝的作品，但影像經藝術家一連串的後製處理，早已切斷了與現實有關的任何連結關係，它成了沒有歷史、沒有所指可堪指涉的碎片零件，等待著畫師重新賦予新意而再生；做為海報的《毫無頭緒》(Not a Clue) 作品，從整名直接表明影像不具任何現實線索的指稱功能，所以影像中鏡面反射的是相當零碎的現實物件及無空間關係的空間，甚至相當混亂地折射了幾團零碎的影片身軀。其透過鏡的反射作用倒置影像，除去任何能指涉的連結，因此如欲透過鏡面門的反射試圖

窺見其他文本，那麼鏡門上的「Not a Clue」文字告訴了你，此路不通！法國當代哲學家馮蘭耶 (Jacques Rancière) 就曾在《影像的政治性》(Politics of images) 一文中，提出唯有行動方可抗禦影像的詭譎，以及論為影像之消滅消費者的罪孽深重 (註 1)，而藉由倒置的置像 (inversion of inversion)，得以看出我們為何以及如何論為影像底下的帶罪消費者。(註 2) 所以可說，曼塔隆經由鏡像和錯置的「倒置的置像」手段消滅影像自身，除之而後快的影像，不是肉眼所見的影像，而是意圖有所指涉現實的影像力，它連結有所指涉的影像機就了如海濱 (Guy Debord) 所言的景觀社會 (Spectacle Society)，這是一個由資本機器將表象能指和慾望所指連結而構成的影像世界；也因此在此現狀、褐色又刺目的湖光山色美景海濱的觀感處，曼塔隆對此影像的奇觀性提出如此的質疑：「不「見」之地或「不見」之地」(An Unseen Land or It All Gone In Reality)，奇觀影像的虛妄性是在無法獲得滿足的現實之上瘋狂地投射出慾望滿足的幻影，然，最真實的影像則是不斷在逝去的當下片刻，一如那日漸斑駁陳腐的海報紙。

再者，個展作品中大量顯見的工廠、學校、軍營等建築，全是真實不用而毀滅零碎的虛死狀態，它們失去了現實中的功能也失去了意義所指，於是曼塔隆就在符號能指與意義所指斷裂之處，以驚天奇巧拼貼、黑白正負片相疊合的處理手法讓光看零落的所指之



曼塔隆 Ohad Matalon | 毫無頭緒 Not a Clue 影片/正負片靜態攝影 尺寸可變 2009-2010

處，經由後製強化著它們無能的死亡狀態，因此可說，攝影客體不僅呈現著事物表象的凋零虛死狀態，更是相當主動強勢地展示了影像敘事的虛死狀態，若欲往影像的敘事裡探究則更覺失落，因為影像與現實敘事並不存在必然的連結關係，就在攝影的當下，被攝物件就已失去了本有意義脈絡，僅僅成為主體能指意義之下的客體。

影像媒體的政治性：去影像觀看的主客體

然而，影像當中也不存在著絕對的主客體關係，觀看的主體一旦落入影像能指所指的連結敘事中，就將淪為被觀看客體的客體，原本的主體可能躍為敘事的主體，觀看的主客體關係將於此中反轉，因此可說影像的陷阱就在敘事與觀看關係中，影像的虛心虛地迴避作用於倒轉主客體關係上，這虛談的周旋經由播放媒體的媒體性而更突出。曼塔隆在這回的攝影置像並非採用常見的相紙輸出展示方式，而是以投影機投射等幅的影像於牆面的白板上，當觀看者逐步向前觀看時，觀看者身軀往往擋住了光的投射使得影像無法顯現，只能見著一身黑影，而往後一步也僅見光點點陣列而成的影像，沒有相紙輸出的物件物理可碰觸，在這光與影作用中的呈現與觀看狀態，不僅層層去除了影像觀看的主體性，也抹消客體的媒體性，更是由此瓦解觀看的主體性，瓦解觀看客體以這些望滿足的主體姿態；換句話說，去影像觀看的主客體關係，即是要消解一種影像的慾望滿足式觀看，慾望滿足的影像讓蓋住了影像主體，以及觀看主體真正的存在樣態。而經由光線投射的影像觀看方式，讓我們彷彿回到了柏拉圖 (Plato)《理想國》洞穴寓言的場景中：

洞穴中有群囚犯因雙腳與脖子都被鐵鍊緊緊綁住，以致只能面向前方而不能轉頭，在他們背後上方燃著火，火炬的光亮投射了物體的影子在洞穴的牆上，而只能往前面望去的囚犯們不由得相信這些影子就是真實，而有一個人掙脫了鐵鍊，並且摸索出了洞口，他第一次看到了真實的事物，他返回洞穴並試圖向其他人解釋，那些影子其實只是虛幻的事物，並向他們指明光明的道路就在洞穴外頭，但對於那些囚犯來說，那個人似乎比他聽過去之前更加愚蠢，並且向他宣稱，除了牆上的影子之外，世界上沒有其他東西了。

影子是經由光照射物體形象而成，所以不論光、物體形象或影子都是影像的外部真實，然將影子視為真實則是觀看主體與影像的內部問題，因此可說曼塔隆的作品透過這些「慾望所製造後又遭慾望棄絕」的物體，表現一種困頓虛死的感勢，這不但來自影像敘事主體的內部狀態，也是以此反映集體內部觀看模式的空白。

有無相生

這影像能指的虛死乃是死亡影像 (dead images) 斷絕對影像的表象觀看，那是短暫的慾望滿足式觀看，落入表象的觀看世界中即是陷入無盡的影像慾望迷陣中，難以脫身；然而影像有形可見的表象之下另有無形的永恆存在，亦如《學校》(The School) 作品中破取建築的建築失去了使用功能，但曼塔隆的正負片疊合法透出了它的精神性光芒，它的死亡狀態是外部的表象，而它現內昂然昂立的樣態則顯著無窮的存在，即是以有形的有限性於存時間輪迴證明無窮的無限性，老子不說以「無名天地之始；有名萬物之母，故常無欲以觀其妙；常有欲以觀其微。」，闡明著「有無相生」的道理，而曼塔隆此個個展中的影像及展示方式，就以可見有形的死亡狀態影像，進入到去影像、去除觀看主體體的死亡狀態之中，進而展開更廣袤的物與我、客體與主體的存在視野。

也唯有於這樣的狀態中，你才能聽見曼塔隆刻畫於現場中安置的媒體裝置，播放著來自外部現實情境中的白色噪音 (white noise)：「就算你將耳朵藏在石縫後，我仍舊要引吭高歌。」

註 1 原文為：「So action as the only adequate response to the falsehood of the images and to the very quiet of being a passive consumer of images」  
註 2 原文為：「so the "inversion of inversion" remains the reserved knowledge of those who know why and how we are all guilty consumers of images」

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English Translation

The Political Play of Poetic Images: Ohad Matalon's North True, South Bright

Text: Jia Zhen Tsai

I know that to make you hear me, to make you believe me, I must sing.  
Even if you hide your ears behind a stone, I must raise my voice so high,  
that my song will blast the golden seed you hide there.

— Dan Beachy-Quick, from the poem "North True, South Bright"

The linguistic and semantic dualism inherent in Dan Beachy-Quick's poetry uncovers a lingering philosophical tension. Rather than framing it as a binary opposition constructed entirely of photographic surface effects, this tension operates as a dialectical play between light and dark, wherein the authentic reality points toward "nothingness," and light signifies a void. Stated differently, it exists in an "in-between" state of dualities—a space where the subject shifts within the "emptiness" of the image. How then does the dialectic of "void" and "nothingness" reveal the actual core of a landscape's existence?

The 2010 solo exhibition by the renowned contemporary artist Ohad Matalon manifests a parallel intellectual trajectory. By infusing his poetic imagery with a profound formal austerity, Matalon

simultaneously detaches and reconstructs the subjective relationship between the viewer and the medium, exposing the flawed logic of voyeuristic optics. Consequently, this body of work can be understood as a meticulous exercise in structural destabilization—not merely a presentation of a refined inner vision, but an externalized, medium-specific deconstruction that mounts an incisive internal political critique against the lyricism of the photographic frame, all while maintaining a radical aesthetic atmosphere.

### **The Poetics of the Photographic Image: Radical De-realization**

This exhibition compiles a vast itinerary of works captured across unstable geopolitical and territorial frontiers, including Israel, Taiwan, Germany, Austria, and Jordan. Yet, through the artist's sophisticated post-production language, these landscapes are systematically stripped of their immediate indexical connections to historical reality. The referential skin of the landscape is severed; its indexical fragments are isolated and computationally re-engineered to be reborn with an entirely new structural urgency.

In a definitive piece such as *Not a Clue*, Matalon directly engages the surface plane. By denying the image any transparent, narrative indexicality, it transforms into an opaque site that reflects back upon the technical architecture of representation. Through this reflective inversion, the photographic medium is purged of all functional rhetoric, operating as a subversion of classical mirrors. It actively resists the predetermined program of the camera apparatus, thereby short-circuiting the spectator's passive ideological consumption.

In his canonical text *The Politics of Images*, the philosopher Jacques Rancière posits that the only viable form of artistic resistance against the omnipresent spectacle lies in a deliberate "inversion of inversion". This strategy unmask the structural mechanisms of how we see, and how we are concurrently transformed into passive consumers of simulated imagery. By deploying this precise methodology, Matalon manipulates the latent structures of the apparatus. Through his calculated subversions, the photographic field shifts from direct referential truth into an abstract, simulated landscape that evades the naked eye.

What we confront is not a literal depiction of reality, but what Guy Debord theorizes as the alienated abstraction of the *Society of the Spectacle*—a capital-driven matrix that enforces a totalizing simulation by substituting concrete material life with its commodified representation. It is precisely within this crack between landscape and image that Matalon stages his critique, rendering the exotic spectacles of global tourism utterly inaccessible. In works like *An Unseen Land or It Is All Gone In Reality*, the picturesque landscapes of idyllic alpine lakes and majestic mountains are reduced to weightless, faded phantoms. The ultimate authenticity of the image is perpetually deferred; it exists as a volatile, non-linear trace, akin to a postcard floating detached in time.

Furthermore, the imagery frequently features derelict architecture, post-industrial skeletons, military ruins, and decaying schools. These structures are rendered completely obsolete, stripped of their original socio-political functions and suspended in a cold state of rigor mortis. They have lost their functional anchor in reality, becoming purely semantic husks. Matalon captures these architectures precisely at the moment of their historical collapse, exposing them through a meticulous process-based technical hybridization. By merging the negative and positive configurations of the exact same exposure, he traps these fading structures within a dense ontological limbo of representation.

Concurrently, this technical strategy reinforces the symbolic death of the architectural object. Consequently, the photographic object ceases to function as a transparent document of historical ruins; instead, it behaves as a material monument to the ultimate failure of indexical memory. The image becomes a site of structural refusal, where the historical referent has vanished, leaving behind only the

cold, mechanical traces of computational sight—rendering the spectator a witness to an absolute loss of subjective meaning.

### **The Politics of the Photographic Medium: De-subjectifying the Spectator's Gaze**

However, the photographic space never functions as an absolute, neutral site of subjective contemplation. The moment the viewing subject enters the narrative trajectory governed by the image matrix, they are immediately converted into a structured object of the apparatus. Concurrently, the original object of the photograph takes position as the primary narrative subject. The standard spectatorial relationship is thus violently inverted within the spatial architecture of the exhibition. By highlighting the physical materiality of the projection medium over the traditional illusion of the photographic paper, Matalon forces the hidden framework of representation into the open.

Throughout the darkened gallery space, the spectator's physical shadow is repeatedly cast onto the massive, luminous screens. As the viewer steps forward to decipher the image, their own silhouette intervenes, obscuring the projected light and rendering the picture plane temporarily blank. The viewer is caught in a loop where closeness eliminates visibility; they can only observe their own shadow-self, while the original landscape recedes into a dark, ungraspable void. By withholding the tactile, physical print and opting for transient, screen-based digital matrices, Matalon strips the image of its material permanence. The traditional objectivity of the photograph is dissolved, dismantled by the active subjectivity of the spectator, who is forced to navigate an unstable informational threshold where the illusion of optical clarity is permanently shattered.

This spatial dynamic of light and obstruction inevitably recalls the foundational phenomenological allegory of Plato's Cave from *The Republic*. In that subterranean domain, bound prisoners are chained in perpetuity, forced to face a bare wall. Behind them, an artificial fire burns, casting the shifting shadows of moving objects onto the wall before their eyes. Having never known another reality, the prisoners naturally mistake these weightless silhouettes for absolute, objective truths.

When a lone captive is unchained and forced to turn toward the blinding light of the fire, the sudden optical rupture induces acute pain and confusion. If he is dragged out of the cave into the radiant domain of the sun, his sight is initially obliterated by the raw exposure of true reality. Should he return to the darkness of the cave to liberate his peers, his unaccustomed eyes fail to navigate the dim shadows, rendering him helpless. His attempts to explain that the wall-shadows are mere illusions are met with ridicule and violent hostility by the prisoners, who choose to protect their comfortable, mediated blindness.

The photographic image is structurally generated through the exact same logic of fire, shadows, and projection. Thus, regardless of whether we analyze the light-sensitive surface or the physical objecthood of the work, the ultimate truth of photography is bound to the political architecture of the spectator's gaze. It is a medium internal to the problem of sight itself. Matalon's project can be understood as an ideological architecture that stages a total capture of the viewing subject. Through works that lock the image into a state of structural paralysis, the installation mirrors the psychological entrapment of the cave. It exposes the internal vacuum of the photographic subject, utilizing the spatial limits of the gallery to reflect the wider cultural condition of automated, unguided vision.

### **The Dialectics of Being and Nothingness**

The structural paralysis of the image functions as a profound allegory for "dead images". This absolute breakdown of representation disrupts the romantic fantasy of the sublime, replacing it with a flat landscape of psychological fatigue and structural refusal. The visual surface appears completely spent, yet within these ghostly fields of simulation, an invisible, timeless eternity perseveres.

This dynamic is explicitly materialized in *The School*, where the historic architectures of institutional discipline are completely stripped of their social utility. The school building stands as an empty, monumental shell—a skeletal phantom of a bygone era. Its physical death is total on the surface, yet underneath this material ruin lies an unyielding, autonomous monumentality. It points toward a past state of ideological authority, demonstrating that even when an image is reduced to a dead phantom, its structural ghost continues to govern the space. It enters a camera-less landscape where the boundary between destruction and preservation is entirely blurred, removing the dead object from its functional history and suspending it within a pure, non-possessable trace of light.

As articulated in classical Taoist philosophy: "*Non-being names the origin of heaven and earth; Being names the mother of all things. Therefore, always without desire we must observe its manifestations; always with desire we must observe its boundaries.*" This profound ontological framework clarifies the dialectical core of Matalon's methodology. By operating precisely at the threshold where positive and negative exposure cancel each other out, his imagery moves fluidly between presence and absence, substance and void.

The technical execution of the work systematically purges the landscape of its documentary authority, dissolving the objective relationship between the spectator and the historical site. Through this radical subtraction, the work exposes the raw, unguided reality of the medium—leaving the landscape to exist not as a commodified object of ownership, but as a transient, volatile phenomenon of pure light operating within the autonomous field of view.

It is only within this highly controlled condition of structural suspension that the viewer can perceive the subtle audio installation nested deep within the exhibition space. The projector emits a continuous, mechanical white noise that fills the darkened room. This sensory blanket operates as a brilliant sonic manifestation of the poem's central demand: "*Even if you hide your ears behind a stone, I must raise my voice so high.*"

#### **Footnotes:**

*Translator's Note:* "So action as the only adequate response to the falsehood of the images and to .1 the very guilt of being a passive consumer of images."

*Translator's Note:* "So 'the inversion of inversion' remains the reserved knowledge of those who .2 know why and how we are all guilty consumers of images."

#### **About the Author:**

*Jia Zhen Tsai is an independent art critic and researcher holding an MA from the Taipei National University of the Arts. Her scholarship is situated at the intersection of cultural studies, psychoanalysis, and contemporary image theory.*