

June 10 - 14, 2012

China National Convention Center, Beijing
Meeting of the Organization for
Human Brain Mapping

Featuring the works of

Paolo Bottarelli (Italy)
Li Yongbin (China)
Luan Xiao (China)
Shubigi Rao (Singapore)
Nathalie Regard (Mexico)
Chris Sharp (USA)
Jeremy Shaw (Canada)

A project curated and coordinated by
Elena Agudio & Manuela Lietti


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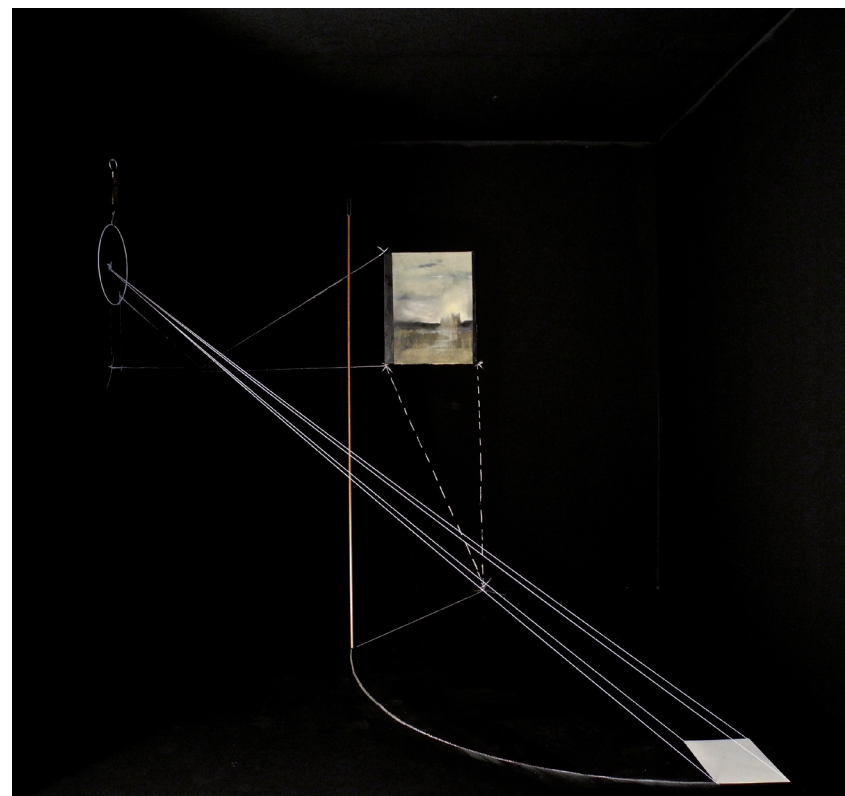
Entering the Mind's |

Entering the Mind's I: Some reflections on the Chinese notion of Self

Manuela Lietti

The concept of the individual as outlined by Western philosophy finds its most successful and most immediate conceptual and visual transposition in the work *The Vitruvian Man* by Leonardo, the portrait of an individual who dominates the space around him with his body. The space surrounding him becomes a mere backdrop that requires a human presence to be activated. The individual becomes the measure of the entire cosmos, the signifier and signified of an existential dimension whose ultimate meaning stresses the importance of self-assertion as a point of departure and arrival for the entire human experience. No iconographic representation could be more antithetical to the concept of the individual characterized by the entirety of Chinese philosophy and culture than the Vitruvian image. In Chinese culture, the individual is deeply bound to the context in which he operates. Confucian canons stress that, for an individual to be fully considered an individual and endowed with a sense of humanity, he must engage in a process of genuine interaction with and participation in the other in order to create his own ontological value.

As a result, a symbiotic process between the Self and the world is necessary; their perfect harmony reaches its peak in the concept of *Tian ren he yi* (nature and man as one). This phrase literally means “the union between the sky (nature, universe) and man,” which implies the full contiguity of the sphere of the individual with that of the cosmos, whose precepts govern the life of each individual. The individual is considered an individual because he is part of a totality that both transcends and completes him. According to Chinese philosophy, the link between man and cosmos, as well as man and society is represented by an individual's heart — in Chinese *xin*, which means both heart and mind. Therefore, for the Chinese the locus of the mind is the heart. The overlapping of heart and mind and their coexistence in the concept of *xin* stresses the adherence and unity of reason and emotion: the heart is the tool the individual relies on not just to approach the world but also to know it, conveying both affective and cognitive implications. The heart *xin* has the capacity for logical reasoning, rational understanding, but also moral will and imagination: it acts as a holistic structure, not subject to any binary logic, in which all human structures are integrated and are unified. *Xin* reflects the blending of thought and feeling, ideas and emotions, and therefore acts as the site of infinite potential.



The ongoing project *ChessCubes* by Paolo Bottarelli (b.1975 in Brescia, Italy, lives and works in Berlin, Germany) schedules the realization of 64 unique units, or “cubes”. These cubes are a 3D projection of a chess-square, and will be realized in pair, one black and one white. Bottarelli refers to these 64 heterotopic units as “mind rooms” or *monads*, the term used by Leibniz to indicate the basic unit of perceptual reality. Monads are here considered centers of force,

pure energy that have *no doors and no windows*, as Leibniz explained: hence they are hermetically closed and the only access to them is through intuition and intuitive apperception. In the two videos *Mind Room / Black* and *Mind Room / White* the sound has been designed by Alex Trebo using two recordings done by the NASA, the sound of the cosmic space done by Voyager 1 and the sound of the solar activity done by Solar Dynamics Observatory (SDO).



The work of Li Yongbin (b. 1963 in Beijing, China, where he lives and works) makes use of the self-portrait, an approach he has embraced for decades, to solve the issue of his identity as a man as well as an artist. In his endless process of self-exploration, Li uses the video camera and camera like a surgical instrument, an extension of

the body to investigate the traces of an existence that would remain unknown without his artistic gesture. In the video *Face 16* and the photos *Life Testimony*, Li Yongbin deconstructs his self, undermining the very concept of existence that, once no longer conveyed by physical presence, leads the artist to the sum of his being.



The work of Luan Xiao *The Creation of the Self* (b. 1981 in Jinan, China, lives and works in Beijing, China) departs from the intrinsic qualities of ephemeral, fragmented, mundane materials like salt and glass powder. These humble ingredients condense into body parts that act as a metonymy of the infinite range

of potential of the human mind and human condition. Bridging the gap between emotion and reason, the physical and the spiritual dimensions, in these pieces impalpable feelings condense into pure matter, while pure matter goes beyond its physical limitations to step into the realm of evocation.

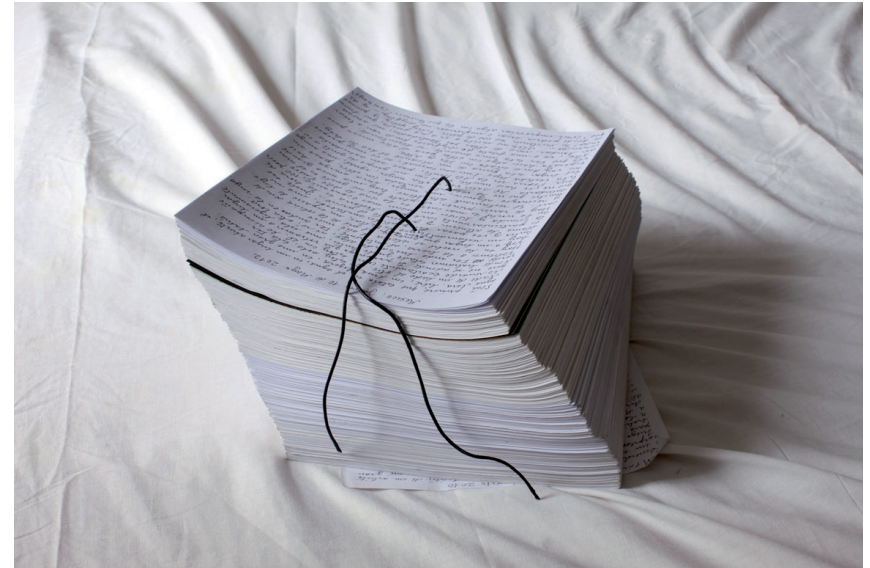
SHUBIGI RAO



The Tuning Fork of the Mind by Singapore-based artist Shubigi Rao (b.1975 in Mumbai, India, lives and works in Singapore) is a multilayered installation based on a pseudoscientific theory about the brainwave activity occurring when an unwary viewer encounters art. The artist developed this theory to chart the collisions between viewer

and artwork, and to prove how the mental gymnastics and cognitive leaps required to comprehend a work of art generate vibrations at specifically calculated frequencies, and with a singular malicious focus, derange the brain. By bringing together the rational and the emotional, Rao's work challenges perception and preconceptions.

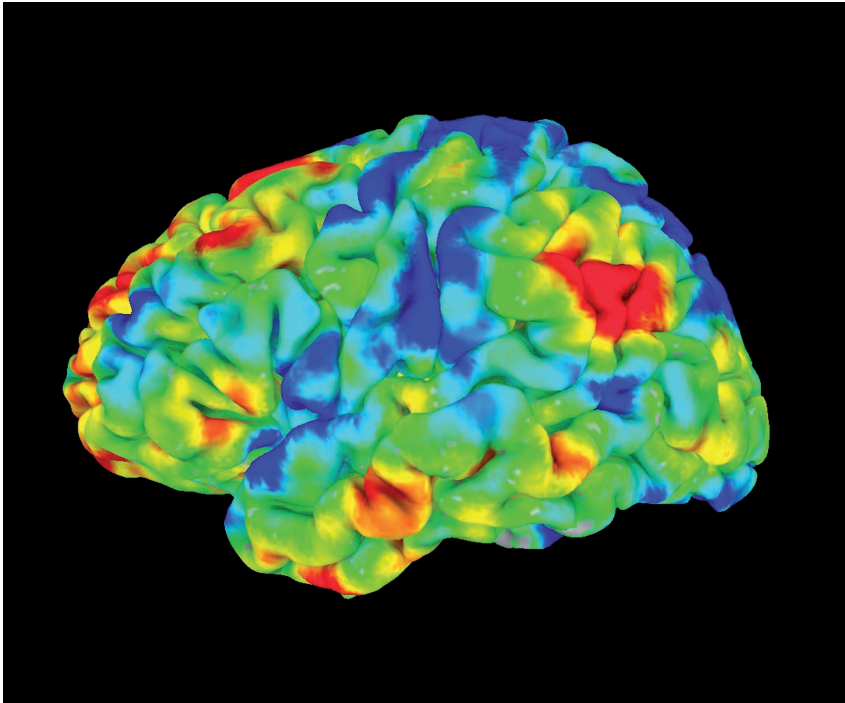
NATHALIE REGARD



The work *Depicting Dreams: 80 Nights* is the result of a cooperation between artist Nathalie Regard (b. 1969 in Madrid, Spain. Lives and works in Mexico City) and Dr. Roberto Toro. Through this piece the artist, that has been keeping a journal of her dreams for the past decades, introduces us with the

intimacy of her oneiric world, a recurrent motif of her artistic ethos. Through the use of electroencephalography Nathalie Regard tries to translate transient, ephemeral, highly-personal emotions into a concrete, rational, widespread and almost codified language. www.dreamsessions.net

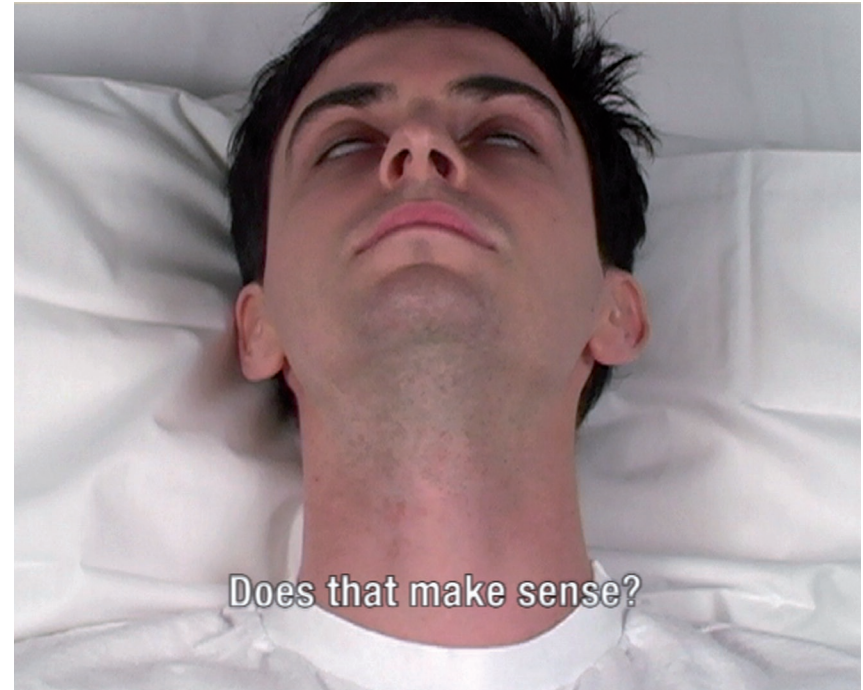
CHRIS SHARP



The video work *Untitled: (The effect of Stravinsky's Rite of Spring and Kant's 3rd Critique on the human brain: a functional magnetic resonance imaging approach)* by Chris Sharp presents fMRI data acquired while an individual listened to the aforementioned piece and meditated on a passage of the *Critique of Judgement*. The work unveils and

plays with the distance between the phenomenological experience of art and the reductions of cognitive neuroscience. *Untitled* also addresses the possibility of representing the impact of abstract aesthetic or intellectual phenomena upon a human being, issues of privacy and the hubris of 'mind reading.'

JEREMY SHAW



DMT, the video installation by Jeremy Shaw (b. 1977 in Vancouver, BC, lives and works in Berlin, Germany) is the transposition of the effects of DMT, a naturally occurring psychedelic compound of the tryptamine family whose presence is widespread throughout the plant kingdom and occurs in trace amounts in mammals, including humans. The hallucinatory experience is the core component of the

work, acting as both its signifier and signified, but it remains unknown to the viewers of the video and to each of the eight selected protagonists. The process of *sensory derailment* evoked by the protagonists' expressions is paired in a compelling way with portions of text and subtitles that act as reminders of the "Other" dimension the viewers are invited to enter.