



Gum Cheng and the "dead letter office" (Curate No More)

阿金與「死信組」(策你老毛)

Gum Cheng (Cheng Yee-Man) is one half of the curatorial/organizational staff of the C&G Artpartment in Mong Kok (Kowloon, Hong Kong), an exhibition space combined with a painting school.

阿金(鄭怡敏)是C&G藝術單位的籌劃組織人員之一。C&G藝術單位結合繪畫教學與展覽空間，位於香港旺角。

The gallery has a decidedly alternative bent, mounting socially and conceptually oriented exhibitions with the occasional collaborative project involving like-minded international organizations.

這個畫廊關心非主流文化，他們的展覽以社會及概念為本，有時會與相似的機構合作舉辦展覽。

The pragmatism of combining an "art business" with a non-commercial gallery encapsulates the ethos of C&G Artpartment, one of self-sufficiency and DIY initiative.

將「藝術生意」與非牟利的畫廊結合起來的經營模式概括了C&G藝術單位的特質。

But Gum, like any human being who is categorized by assumed social and economic roles that are usually implied in the question, "what do you do?" (rather than, "what do you think?") desires to step out of the role of "curator" and become an active exhibiting artist. For two years he left Artpartment's curatorial duties to his partner (Clara Cheung) and embarked on a roster of ten artistic productions which he compiled under the title, "Curate No More".

「你是做什麼的？」(而不是「你有什麼想法?」)阿金與這個問題的被問者都被假設有一個社會及經濟活動的角色，但是他想跳出「策展人」這個角色，成為一個活躍的展出藝術家。兩年前他將藝術單位的策展工作交由他的拍檔張嘉莉負責。在這段時間他完成了十個藝術計劃，將之命名為「策你老毛」。

All of the projects were idea-oriented, at times evocative of art historical "Conceptual Art" pieces from the past, with Gum's various visual and performative works also being compiled into a free foldable poster which included the exhibition dates, locations and a conceptual brief for all ten of the projects, thus moving the projects into the form of printed matter.

這些計劃都是以理念為本，有時會令人想起以往藝術史當中的「概念藝術」。一個可折疊的免費海報收錄了他的十個項目的展覽日期，地點及簡介。這些海報將這些藝術項目變為一種印刷品。

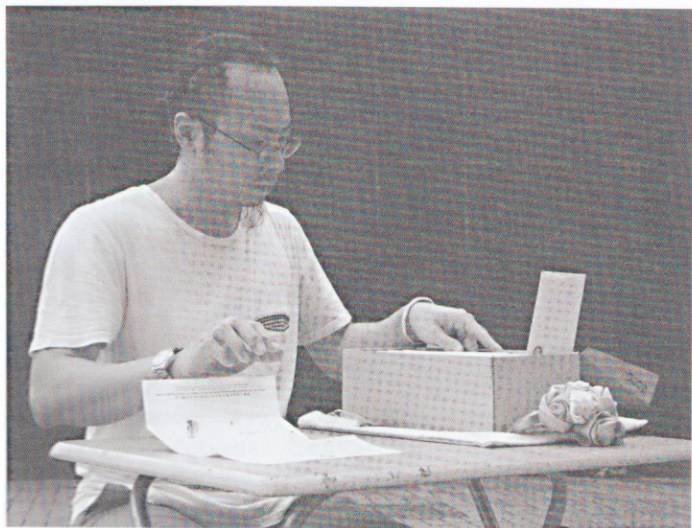
Out of the ten works, "Mail Art", a title pointing to the international artistic practice of "mail art" which sought (in the late 1960s) to subvert the gallery and museum circuit by encouraging artist-to-artist exchanges that were solicited, shared and sent by post. In Gum's case, this exchange attempted to subvert and comment upon the channels of communication between the so-called average citizen and the hierarchies of the Hong Kong government.

這十個計劃當中的「郵遞藝術」(Mail Art)與上世紀六十年代末進行的藝術行動同名。六十年代末的活動鼓勵藝術家相互通信以削弱畫廊與博物館的網絡勢力。阿金的這個計劃是為了展示和評論所謂市民與政府部門的高級官員之間的通信渠道，並削減它的影響力。

From September 2013 to August 2015, Gum sent one letter a week to the Hong Kong (and Beijing appointed) Chief Executive, Mr. Leung Chun Ying (aka CY Leung). The letters included a selected news clipping



and Gum's own opinions about that particular news story. The "Mail Art" project finally took two forms: a performance near the Legislative Council (the seat of the Hong Kong government) in which Gum opened many of the Chief Executive's rote responses and an exhibition at the Kubrick



bookstore in Yau Ma Tei in which one hundred of the bureaucratic responses were displayed.

從2013年9月至2015年8月，阿金每個星期寄一封信給北京任命的香港行政特首梁振英（亦稱CY Leung）。這些信件包含了新聞剪報以及阿金自己的新聞評論。「郵遞藝術」計劃最後有兩個展覽形

式：一個阿金是在立法會（香港政府的議席）附近閱讀行政長官的回覆；另一個是在油麻地的Kubrick書店展出政府官僚式的答覆。

There is such a thing as a “dead letter office” (in the post office) that collects mail that is deemed undeliverable due to an incorrect or incomplete address. Gum’s project refers to a kind of “dead letter office” where the response or acknowledgement to any inquiry does not exactly indicate whether one has reached a human or a machine (the “automated response”).

郵局有一個「死信組」收集因錯誤或不完整地址而無法派遞的信件。阿金的計劃指出政府有另一種「死信組」。這個死信組的回覆並不能確定公眾查詢是否由人手或機器（自動回覆）處理。

In lieu of this uncertainty, a state of affairs supported by Hong Kong tax dollars, it would seem, as with Gum’s “Mail Art”, that the only reasonable outcome (at this stage) would be humorously absurd, not exactly funny, but a playful poke in the eye of the unresponsive.

這個靠税金運作的系統令人疑惑，目前可以合理替代這種不確定性的是阿金的「郵遞藝術」對它的無反應作出幽默又不好笑的挑釁。



All photos by Clara Cheung
from Gum Cheng’s book “Curate No More”

<http://www.localidea.com/product/curatenomoregumsartproject/>

Lianhuanhua:

Linked-Serial Picture Story Book and China's Pop

The "linked-serial picture story book" or Lianhuanhua (連環畫) a form of popular culture in China for almost one hundred years, can now be found in flea markets and used bookstores in many Chinese cities. Lianhuanhua literally means "linked-serial pictures" in Chinese, but the genre also refers to Xiaorensu (小人書) or Gongzaishu (公仔書) which mean "books for children" and "cartoon picture books".

Linked-serial picture books are usually only about three by five inches in size with one picture to a page. This diminutive illustrated story format first became popular in urban China in the 1920s when Western lithographic printing technology was introduced in Shanghai. In the 1920s, many of these pocket-sized picture books were stories adapted from Chinese classics or Peking operas. During the Republican period, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s, stories from popular dramas, traditional fiction, or contemporary films were frequently adapted. With the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Communist art authorities considered the popular genre of linked-serial pictures as both an ideological problem and an educational opportunity. They began to eliminate poorly produced comics that promoted superstition, pornography, or violence, and to replace them with educationally inspiring narratives that incorporated the current Chinese Communist political ideologies while still maintaining their brand of popular entertainment.

Up to that time, linked-serial picture book covered a wide range of topics and a diversity of content which made it an important and unique type of popular culture that targeted the vast majority of people in China. The topics and themes were very often related to traditional Chinese culture or historically specific elements which distinguished linked-serial picture book from the comic books of other countries. This type of picture book intended to convey instruction and information as well as pleasure and entertainment.

Linked-serial picture books were socially and culturally significant in that they offered a cheaper form of entertainment to the majority the urban Chinese population, some of whom could not afford the price of admission to a movie theater but could afford to buy or rent the linked-serial picture book version of the film. When a new film came out, painters of linked-serial picture books brought their apprentices to the cinema with them, and hand drew scenes in the movie as it was playing. The books also used photographs (or screen captures) of films. The production moved quickly, and a

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an article by Natalie Siu-Lam Wong

new linked-serial would appear the morning after a film had been screened. These storybooks were generally sold at prices lower than the cost of a theater ticket. At the time when life was rather simple and resources were limited, linked-serial picture books were one of the only readily available and relatively affordable forms of mass entertainment. In the 1950s, children could spend one cent and for a whole day sit down at a street bookstall and consume as many picture books as possible (one cent in China in the 1950s approximately equals five dollars in today's Hong Kong or about 60 US cents).

From 1950 onwards, the publishing of linked-serial picture books in urban China mainly became the responsibility of Beijing People's Art Publishing House and Shanghai People's Art Publishing House. The topics and content of stories from this period were specifically selected and edited to correspond to both Communist political ideals and to the general readers' tastes. During the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s, the publication of linked-serial picture books fell in line with the extreme political agendas of the time, and therefore the topics and themes were limited to model operas (Yangbanxi 样板), class struggle (jieji douzheng 階級鬥爭), and the like.

In the late 1960s, the radical fervor of the Red Guards pushed China into all-encompassing social turmoil. Schools and colleges were closed and the economy started to suffer. Since the central planning of economic systems and policies continued to put little emphasis on profitability or competition, China's economy became stagnant. During the 1960s and 1970s, most of the urban educated youth became Red Guards and were sent to "learn" from the workers and farmers of the mountainous areas or the rural farming villages. It was not until late 1970s that the Chinese government took steps to improve the economy and to raise the standard of living of the average citizen, qualities that had been decried as "suspect" or bourgeois during the Cultural Revolution.

When China's economy and infrastructure resumed after 1978, the status of linked-serial picture books was revived and once again became popular. In contrast to the splitting up of families during the Cultural Revolution, in which children were separated from their parents, and husbands from wives, one of the prevalent story themes in the early 1980s was about the freedom of marriage (freedom to choose your partner), and the reunion and harmony of the family. Rena's Marriage published in 1983 and The Mid-Autumn Full Moon in 1984 both fall into this category. Also at that time, books with martial arts themes became popular, books which were based on the Cantonese (Hong Kong) and Taiwanese martial arts fictions - the South Shaolin Master published in 1985 being a good example.

In 1980, The Central Academy of Fine Arts opened a subject for linked-serial picture book drawing, and with the reviving economy in 1982, the printing volume of linked-serial picture books was twenty times greater than what had been produced in 1960; and finally, in 1985, China Lianhuan Hua Publishing House, the only national professional picture book publisher, was placed under the management of the China Fine Arts Publishing Group.

What follows are four examples of Lianhuanhua:



Rena's Marriage
热娜的婚事

adapted from the film of the same name
by Li Pengcheng and Zhang Jianguo
Publisher: China Film Publishing House
Distributor: Xinhua Bookstore
Place and year of publication: Beijing, 1983

This is a story about mercenary marriage as opposed to the freedom to choose a marriage partner in Uyghur culture (an ethnic group that primarily lives in north-western China). Rena is a beautiful Uyghur woman who works as a nurse in a hospital. She falls in love with a teacher called Yashen. However, Rena's mother has arranged for her beautiful daughter to marry a rich man. Having witnessed her friend Kadeer become the victim of mercenary marriage, Rena decides to struggle for the right to marry the man that she loves.



144 热娜来到医院会客室，见到了妈妈。阿米娜含泪说：“孩子，你能原谅妈妈吗？”一句话，使母女间的不快烟消云散。

145 艾力和曼力丹探头看到了热娜母女的倩景，感到无比欣慰，双双悄悄地离开了。



The Mid-Autumn Full Moon
月到中秋

adapted on the film of the same name
by Wang Yi
Publisher: China Film Publishing House
Place and year of publication: Beijing, 1984

Ling Mengqing and Fang Shu finally become husband and wife at the mid-autumn festival (a traditional harvest festival through-out China). They are both educated intellectuals at the time of the cultural revolution who have already had children with an ex-husband and ex-wife. When Mengqing first arrives at Shu's home, Fang's eldest daughter Juan Juan does not accept Ling as her step-father and then Mengqing's son Ling Qiang finds out that Shu's son Shu Sheung has spent a lot of money on a camera. This upsets the whole family. Shu Sheung, Ling Qiang and Juan Juan decide to leave their adopted family. Mengqing looks everywhere for his sons and daughter, finds them, and eventually Juan Juan realize that Mengqing greatly helped her father during the cultural revolution.



66 谢生回到奶妈家，躺在床上，呆呆地望着墙上挂的照片，心情很不平静。

67 墙上挂着他们和妈妈的合照。



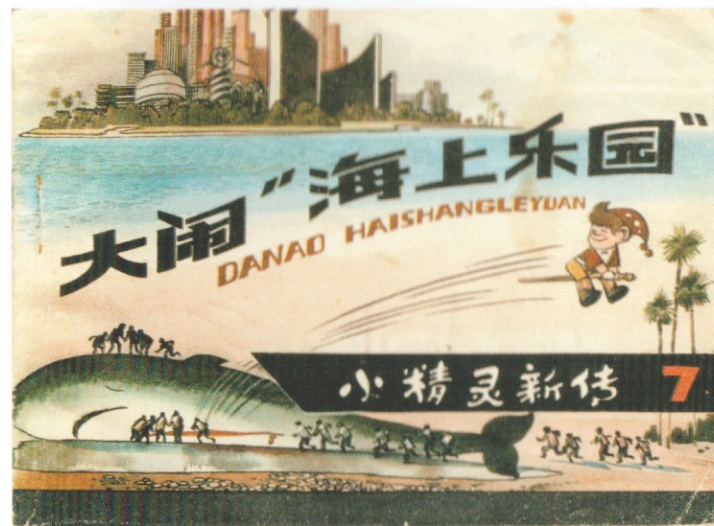
The South Shaolin Master (Part 1) 南拳王(一)
 adapted from a film of the same name
 by Xiao Li
 Publisher: China Film Publishing House
 Place and year of publication: Beijing, 1985

Patriotic overseas Chinese Lin Hainan are bringing back donation money from the south to support the uprising led by the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom against the Qing Dynasty. On his way Lin Hainan is ambushed by the Qing troops and seriously injured. He unexpectedly escapes to a red boat which is the base of a theatre company. Lin Hainan meets the monk Wu Bai on the boat who not only tends to his injuries but also instructs him in Kung-fu skills. With Wu Bai's advice, Lin Hainan successfully beats the tyrant Zhao Shixiong and becomes known as the South Shaolin Master. Qing's secret police attack and burn the red boat. Lin Hainan, Wu Bai and the people of the theatre escape and hide at the South Shaolin Temple. At the temple, Lin Hainan practices South Shaolin Kung-fu for a year in order to take revenge. In the end, he manages to overcome the most difficult part of his training and is victorious over the Qing's troops.



56 和尚一边傻呵呵地笑着，一边疯疯颠颠地往山上跑。林海
 南只好强忍伤痛，紧追不舍。

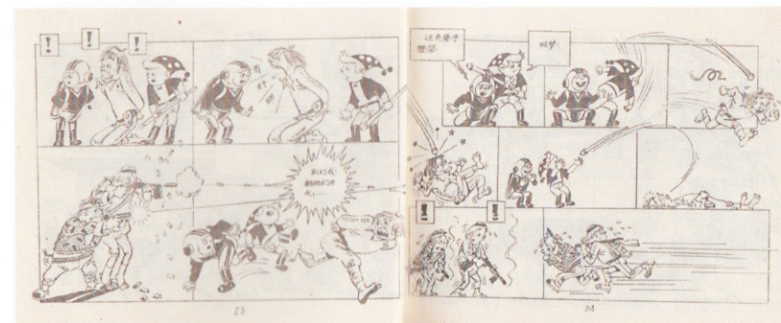
57 追到深山密林中，那疯和尚三拐两拐就不见了。林海
 南看前面似有个山洞，便钻进去寻那和尚。



New Elf's Story 7 The Adventures at the Maritime Park
 /小精灵新传7大闹海上乐园
 by Wang Pei Kun
 Publisher: Hebei Fine Arts Publishing House
 Editor: Zhang Qiu-Ju
 Publication Year: 1989

The Adventures at the Maritime Park (pictured above) is the seventh episode of this series, a story about an old elf who has witnessed human history over a long period of time. He uses magic to help good people or to punish the bad. In this episode, Elf is swallowed by a huge whale but miraculously escapes and is rescued by a character called Little Flyman; they then work together, turning the villain's base "The Maritime Park" upside down.

In contemporary China, the author Wang Pei Kun is known as "the most famous lianhuanhua painter". In 1991 his Elf's stories reached a total print run of more than ten million copies, becoming one of the best-selling comic books in China and Taiwan where it was eventually reprinted.



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