

三位男藝術家對婆仔屋的想念都是幽幽怨怨的，何仲儀的作品卻相對地較有政治性，宣揚新時代的新女性意識。而的確，有些人不甘於跟隨一般女人的生活模式：結婚、持家、生子而選擇獨身的生活，甘願承受社會壓力，這些意識到現在看來仍相當進步，值得敬佩。何的作品《新時代女性叻靚醒》，藝術家自白寫道：「很多新時代女性獨立自主，嚴格自我審視，不斷掌握各方面知識來充實自己，對時裝、皮鞋、手袋、購物、髮型、化妝、養顏、修身、餐廳、減肥、娛樂、明星……無所不知，無所

不曉。今天，新女性終於爭取到了不僅是花瓶和附隨的角色了。」她把房間貼滿報紙，一對高跟鞋踢開鳥籠底。有人說現代女人是從一個籠到另一個籠，穿高跟鞋是現代式紮腳，是一種「壓制」，為了滿足男性的幻想，而不是從自己的需求出發，說不上獨立自主。有人說穿高跟鞋、減肥、修身令女人們自信心增強，生活愉快，約會頻頻，追求個人快樂的生活，是自主的表現。甚麼才是個人超越，是很難有一個特定的答案。



《新時代女性叻靚醒》 Mulher moderna (investigação sobre a mulher da Ásia especificamente)
何仲儀 Joey Ho

I was a little envious of the Macanese artists who had created installations in the Old Ladies House of such outstanding character. With an effort, one would easily imagine how a bunch of elderly ladies had spent their last days there. In the "Easy Installation" exhibit, many artists responded to the character of the

place. There was also an artistic translation of those ideas, eg, Frank Lei arranged some old clothes, a five-drawer chest, Chinese Nanyin, and a wash basin under dripping laundry. All these seemed to aim at reconstructing the daily life of the elderly ladies in their time. The floral-patterned clothes in red and blue, and the way they were discarded, reminded people of the Italian artistic style of the 1960s, Arte Povera. Artists who belonged to this movement were opposed to the commercialization of art. That's why they always used materials belonging to the people in their work. Lei's work resembled a series of works made of rags by Boltanski—the rags were used to reconstruct past life and commemorate the deceased. But Lei's version was localized. A wash basin, bamboo poles, a five-drawer chest, and the Chinese Nanyin are all very local. They all evoked visitors' emotions, especially those of one of our members, Kith Tsang. Being over forty, he was caught in the thrill of experiencing a familiar past in a foreign place. No wonder he could not stop taking pictures.

最能從當下的身體和環境出發，我看是寫得滿滿的一本觀眾回應，裏面有說作品，有說婆仔屋很恐怖，很多蚊。能夠引起這麼多觀眾們的反應，叫人十分佩服主辦機構推動藝術的努力，而且今次藝術家的背景十分有趣，有商人，有唱片騎師，不限於主辦單位的會員，顯出組織的開放性，展覽作品的取向也因而各有不同。回想當天樹下的講座，大有榕樹頭聽故仔的逸趣，希望那麼好的地方，可以繼續辦這些有活力的文化活動。ps

Unlike Lei who reconstructed daily life from the past, Ng Fong-chow tried to reconstruct a state of mind. It seems Ng was asking whether the old ladies had ever thought of finding peace of mind in religion as they faced the predicament of a poor and solitary life. Ng decorated the room with red lamps that were juxtaposed with photographs of religious icons and two-dimensional dolls made of cloth. The project helped Ng approach the same question from the other way round—perhaps the old ladies had been even poorer before their stay at the House, meaning they managed to lead a generally happier life in the House without the comforts of religion. The work was stimulating; the questions remain. In the end, through an understanding of the elderly, one might even find oneself.

The Old Ladies House made James Chu think about flowers blooming and perishing. It seems he is very interested in the concept of time. Bottles of lilies were placed on paper mirrors. The work changed through time. Every time the visitor looked at it, the work was different. It was a very different take from the traditional approach of commemorating an object or historical event through the use of sculptures made of durable materials like copper and stone. What Chu was commemorating was the permanence of "change itself".

Chu had the swing in the courtyard replaced by rosewood chairs. If he had had those chairs placed in the hall, everyone would have had their rightful place according to age and family status. The power structure would have been expressed. But placing those chairs in the courtyard helped dissolve that power structure. The chair was for leisure only. Perhaps it meant a return to youth? Or a stoic submission to life? I still feel the installation worked very well in the House.

The three male artists approached the House in a melancholic way. In contrast, Joey Ho's work was more political, advocating a sense of the new women in a new era. Many of these women were not satisfied with the conventional choices in the life of a woman—getting married, taking care of a family and raising babies. Rather, they chose to live on their own despite social pressure. These ideas are still ahead of their times in the modern Asian world, and are admirable. Ho's work, entitled "Women of the New Era—Brainy, Pretty, Smart", had included the artist's written narrative, "Many women of the new era are independent. They are attuned to themselves and strive for self-actualization through the gathering of knowledge. They know everything from fashion, shoes, shopping, hairstyle, makeup, body and health, restaurants, diet, entertainment and movie stars. Today, new women are no longer mere flowers with subsidiary roles." She pasted newspaper all over the room and had a high-heeled shoe kicking open the bottom of a bird cage. There is a saying that modern women go from one cage to another—wearing high-heeled shoes is a modern form of foot-binding. It is a form of coercion that aims to satisfy male fantasies rather than a practice arising from female needs. It connotes neither independence or autonomy. Some say wearing high-heels, dieting and slimming down boost women's confidence because these make their lives happier with dates all year round, that they express a form of autonomy. There may never be any conclusive definition of what exactly is transcendence.

If there is anything that comes back to one's body and its immediate surroundings, the thick book of visitors' responses ought to stand out first. Some comments were about the works. Others said the House was haunted and full of mosquitoes. That the work stimulated so much attention makes one admire the strenuous efforts of the organizer in promoting art. In addition, the backgrounds of participating artists were very interesting—from businessmen to disc jockeys. They were not just members of the organizing institution. This shows the openness of the organizer, which led to the diversity of work. I still remember how a talk under the tree the other day reminded me of how charming it was to listen to story-tellers in the shade of an old pine tree. I hope that more of such cultural activities, so full of vitality, will take place in this charming place. ps (translated by yang yeung)