PIPELINE
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DANCING IN THE WILD
野外的舞蹈

Chim Pom
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and more...
A strange mix of the corrosive and the heartfelt runs through the stunts pulled by artistic collective Chim↑Pom. Formed in 2005 by Masataka Okada, Ellie, Yasutaka Hayashi, Toshinori Mizuno, Motomu Inamoka and Ryuta Ushiro, the gang met while gravitating around Japanese artist Makoto Aida, whose artistic legacy of politically engaged, scathing yet humorous works they claim proudly. As I was sitting in their studio, one floor of a pre-war house that used to be a brothel in Tokyo’s Koenji district, a neighbourhood known as a birthplace of Japanese punk rock, Ushiro showed me 10-year-old videos of his group chasing rats in Tokyo’s fashionable Shibuya nightlife district. Their Super Rat project, which they embarked on after exhausting other entertainment options, has resulted since 2006 in the production of taxidermy rat installations, where the Pikachu-yellow rodents, styled in reference to the Pokémon character, are staged in various ridiculous poses, in the process becoming the group’s mascot. Watching the videos, the performative component of the work, I struggled to keep up with the group’s frenetic
attempts to track the animals through Tokyo’s dark alleys, tripping over garbage bins, armed with nets and laughing loudly, their finds punctuated by Ellie’s girly screams. Ellie is the charismatic, pretty solo female member of ChimT Pom, a name that sounds like “penis” in Japanese. The term “super rats” comes from Japanese exterminators, who so describe a breed that thrives in spite of poisons and traps, a metaphor the collective initially harnessed to refer to themselves and their lifestyle, and then later to refer to the Japanese people in general and their ability to survive nuclear catastrophes. In 2007, in Black of Death, although drawing on a similar train of thought, they shifted their focus from rat to crow, another local pest. This time they used a stuffed specimen that they waved at arm’s length while driving a motorcycle through town, attracting a flock of crows to follow them. “The crows wanted to help the stuffed crow, but eventually they realised it wasn’t real,” says Ushiro of the wacky yet serious project. The gang subsequently created Tokyo-themed postcards in which Ellie, who often embraces a celebrity persona, poses with the crows near tourist landmarks.

Like other artists in Japan, the collective fell into deep sorrow and powerlessness after the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster that devastated Japan in March 2011. But in the aftermath, when the artistic community questioned the validity of its discipline, ChimT Pom organised the exhibition Real Times, featuring a series of interventions in reaction to the events. Such an intervention, documented in the video Level 7 feat. Myth of Tomorrow, was a candid prank that sparked media uproar in 2011 when the artists illegally completed a large mural by Tanō Okamoto, Myth of Tomorrow (1969), in Shibuya station. The mural, which represents a chaotic scene above the Pacific Ocean, not only referring to the 1945 Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings but also hinting at later disastrous episodes resulting from the nuclear arms race in a semi-abstract modernist style, and was originally created for a hotel in Mexico. “It isn’t rectangular, there was space left for the hotel stairs at the bottom corners. We added an image in that blank space,” says Ushiro, showing me the image, which features broken nuclear plants with skull-shaped furnaces, and matches the original work in colour and style. ChimT Pom’s addition has been removed by the authorities.

I was particularly touched when Ushiro showed me the video K.I.Ai 100 (2011), also part of the Real Times show. It is a 10-minute documentation of an unrehearsed performance in which the artists and a small group of young people from Fukushima Prefecture’s Soma city huddle together on a site in the wrecked city to shout 100 cheers, specifically “ki-ai”, a short martial-arts yell. One after the other, in a circle, each of them comes up with a sentence, which they all cheer together, and these outbursts soon evolve to include some surprising claims. From “Let’s do this!”, “I want a girlfriend!”, “Me too!” “Japan is awesome!”, “Thank-you Soma city!” and “I’ll do my best!”, this spiralling emotional improv eventually generates absurd shout-outs such as “Radiation exposure is great!” and “Soma city sucks!”. Ultimately the 10-minute flash action becomes relief from post-traumatic stress disorder, a grief support group and a pep talk all at once.

After that they invited other artists such as Ai Weiwei, Eva and Franco Mattes, Trevor Paglen and Taryn Simon to participate in a peculiar exhibition that would respond to the events of Fukushima throughout time. Located in the radioactive exclusion zone, Don’t Follow the Wind (2015), which the artists installed by borrowing visiting permits granted to former residents of the exclusion zone, is invisible – as impossible to perceive directly as radioactivity itself. The show will be open to the audience the day the area is cleared for re-entry by the government. Until then, the works are installed in the houses where people used to live, replacing those people’s presence, and perhaps condemned to rot and decay before they ever get to be seen by the public. For now, one non-descriptive part of the show consists of listening to a solemn, slightly frustrating audio file in English and Japanese about the show’s inaccessibility at www.dontfollowthewind.info.

But if the collective tackle difficult subjects, it is often through controversy, because their style is politically incorrect and inhabited by a certain rock ‘n’ roll spirit, a rebellious attitude that doesn’t fit with Japanese society’s codified norms of conduct. ChimT Pom are a particular kind of attention-seeking subversive poet-avengers, true to their Makoto Aida inspiration. In 2008 they hired a plane to skywrite the word “pika” (Japanese for “flash”, referencing the atomic
本的滅鼠藥，用來形容不管用什麼藥，鼠夾都滅不掉的老鼠。Chimà Pom 原本用這個押韻形容他們自己和他們的生活方式，之後用來廣泛形容日本人，尤其是在核爆中幸存的能力。2007 年的作品《Block of Death》（死亡之黑）雖然撕裂了類似的論述，但他們把關注轉移到了鳥獸。另一種更討厭的事物身上。他們開始追求遠離大街小巷，同時把一個不做過的鳥類標本高高舉出，吸引著一群鳥獸跟著他們。「那群鳥獸想救這個鳥獸，不過後來發現這個鳥獸要殺的。」關於這個古怪而荒誕的作品，石村如是補充到。隨後他們發行了東京系列明信片。明信片上是擁有明星外表的 Ellie 在各處旅遊點和鳥獸的合拍。

正如許多其它的日本藝術家，在 2011 年三月月日本受到地震、海嘯、核爆的重創後，這個國度陷入深深的悲傷與無助感中。但是在隨後的波谷中，當他們質疑自身原則的正確性時，他們舉辦了「Real Times」（真實年代）展出，其中有許多對時事的回應。錄像作品《Level 7 Feat ‘Myth of Tomorrow’ 》（七樓表演）記載了他這次的時事介入。2011 年冬季大廈未經法律允許在澀谷站創作了壁畫《Myth of Tomorrow》（明日傳說），這個作品是與人無害的玩笑，並在媒體上引發騷動。這個壁畫展示了太平洋上混亂的景觀，而其所代表的不只是 1945 年廣島，長崎的核彈爆炸，更以半抽象的現代主義手法暗指了其後核武軍備競賽導致的各種悲劇。這個壁畫本身為墨西哥的一家旅店設計。「作品原本不是長方形的，在角落有為旅店的標誌留出的空白。我們之後在空白處加了幾筆。」同本一邊說一邊為我指出圖片上的標誌點，這裏和全作的顏色，風格都很配搭，然而這個墳筆被當局移除了。

同本為我展示的錄像作品《Ki-A100》尤其觸動了我，這個錄像其實就是「Real Times」（真實年代）展出的一部分。錄像全程 10 分鐘，編導過程甚為演練。這群藝術家同一些年輕人在失事的福島南馬市聚集在一起，共同呼喊了一百次，尤其是「碼」，一種武術中的叫喊。他們圍成一圈，一個接一個的想出一句話，之後一起喊出來。這種情緒的爆發很快融入了一些讓人驚奇的變化，例如「讓我們開始吧！」、「我想要女朋友！」、「我也在！」、「日本好樣的！」、「謝謝福島！」、「我會盡力的！」。

這個循環的情感卻與表演最後引出了些荒唐的叫喊，如同「暴露在輻射裡還真呆！」、「福島真缺錢！」。最終這個十分鐘的閃電活動治癒了創傷的隱患障礙，既平復了悲傷又鼓勵了士氣。

之後他們邀請了艾未未，Eva、Franco Mattes, Trevor Paglen 與 Taryn Simon 等藝術家來共度關於福島事件經過的特展。《Don’t Follow the Wind》（不要隨風）於 2015 年在福島展區，藝術家們通過借用福原住民的民間許可在福島區建造。這個作品不可見的，就如同放射能量本身。只有當政府解除了這塊的電離這些作品才能公之於眾。在那些之前，房子中代替原住民的藝術作品可能在公開前已就已經腐朽破敗。當時，該作品並非寫實的一部分是在 “www.dontfollowthewind.info” 聆聽英日雙語的一段錄音。音頻大致講述了作品不可見，既簡單又感動。

但當他們接觸較為棘手的話題時，通常會避開爭議，因為他們的風格政治並不搭調，帶有一定的搖滾精神，以及叛逆的態度，這種態度並不適合日本社會規範錯誤的方式。Chimà Pom 是一種獨特的，引人注目的，蓄意破壞的詩人復仇者，堅守著會田成為他們的靈感。2008 年，他們使用了一架飛機，在舉辦廣島現當代美術館的獨展前，在和平紀念公園，或稱原爆紀念公園上方的天空寫下「ビカソ」（日語「友」的意思，代表著原子彈爆炸）。結果，多方媒體開始原爆爆炸與藝術的名義對他們的行為表達了憤慨。美術館方面很懼怕，強制藝術家們做公開道歉並取消展出。然而，Chimà Pom 在同原子彈爆炸遇難者組織直接聯繫後，發現遇難者並沒有像媒體聲稱的那樣真的受到傷害，反而對藝術家們的緘默方式很感興趣。於是在 2009 年三月，他們出版了名為《Why Can’t We Make the Sky of Hiroshima Pink?》（我們為什麼要在廣島的天空留下粉紅色的）。通過採訪調查以及評論家，藝術家的供稿探究了這個話題，這是個相當深思熟慮的引發，使看起來衝動任性的事物充滿了成熟想法。

成熟很關鍵，通過對預期觀點進行延伸闡述，成熟也成為他們所有作品的共性特性，但也帶了帶濃重的黑色幽默色彩。他們用即興創作的權利，或說把權力推向極端。在 2014 年的《Love is Over》（愛已終結）中，Ellie 真實的婚禮成為了一個巨大，混亂的公開派對，警察不得不