

托马斯·迪曼德： 历史的结舌

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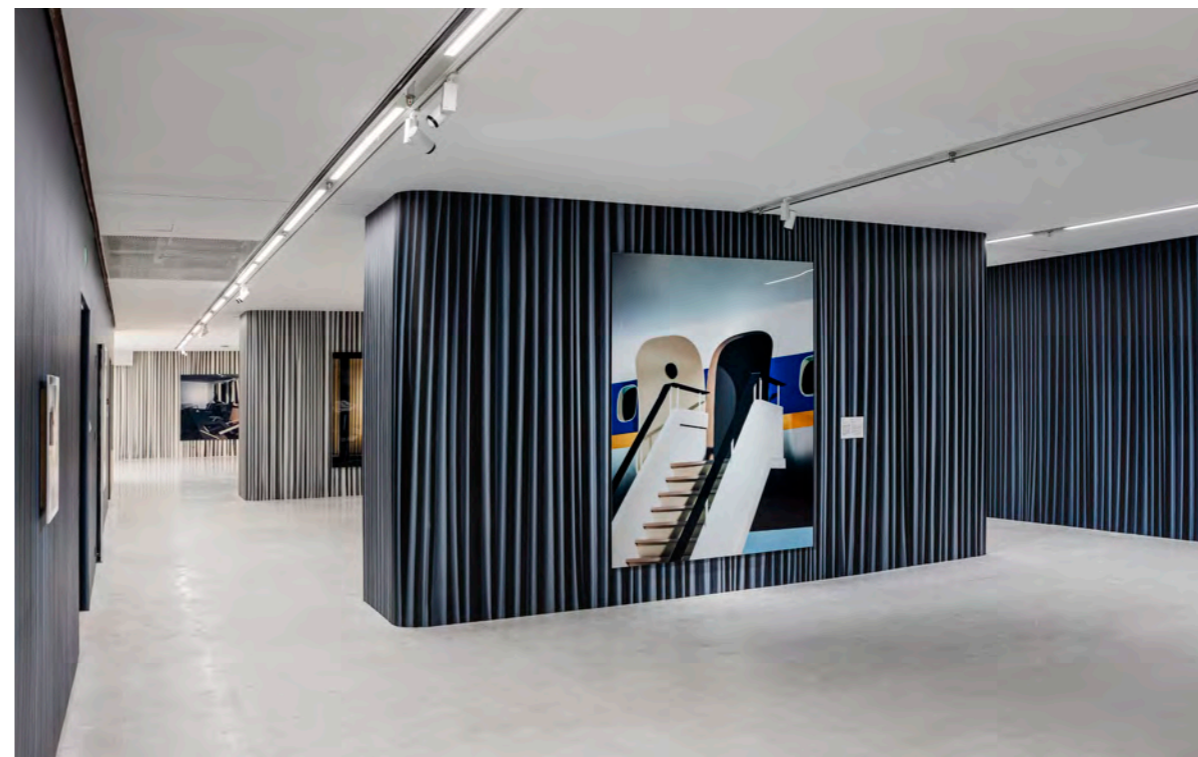
“托马斯·迪曼德：历史的结舌”展览现场，
UCCA Edge, 上海, 2022 年
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“Thomas Demand: The Sutter of History”, installation view, UCCA
Edge, Shanghai, 2022
Courtesy UCCA Center for Contemporary Art.

THOMAS DEMAND: THE STUTTER OF HISTORY

UCCA Edge 于今年夏天举办了德国观念艺术家托马斯·迪曼德在中国的首个回顾展，集中为观众呈现了艺术家的摄影、电影、墙纸等 70 余件作品。其中所展出的摄影作品横跨迪曼德自 90 年代以来的整个创作生涯：从奠定艺术家声望的巨大尺幅的照片装置开始，到近十年间平行开启的“日常”系列小品，再到其更近期具有一定反思倾向的、直接拍摄他人模型的“模型研究”系列照片。

在画册、网页、印刷品上观看迪曼德的照片与在展览现场观看照片装置之间的体验差别是巨大的。当然，无论是在概念、物质、市场层面，前者与后者本就不属于同一“物种”，即便作为图像它们看似承载着一致的信息。迪曼德的巨幅照片可以带来一种类似于观看绘画的体验，而观者的第一印象可能是某一处空荡的日常空间场景，正如其作品标题所写的那样直接：“浴室”（1997）、“舷梯”（2001）、“办公室”（1995）、“避难所”（2021），等等。伴随着脚步与目光的游移，画面中的细节缓慢地展开，累积，并最终达致某处视觉与理解的跃迁点，创造出一种熟悉又疏离的观感：在观者意识到画面中每一个角落都被纸张所铺盖的刹那，作为“表皮”的纸与图像被再次观看，生成一种新的印象，即艺术家对图像的彻头彻尾的控制。正如同细致地观看那些将随机和即兴因素排除在外的大尺幅绘画，观者很难相信画面中存在着什么偶发或失控的因素，即便是留白。



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 “Thomas Demand: The Sutter of History”, installation view, UCCA Edge, Shanghai, 2022
 Courtesy UCCA Center for Contemporary Art.

对于这些图像的生产流程，艺术家已经谈论过许多。我们不妨回顾大多数阐述、访谈文本所指向的同样自洽的创作流程叙事：艺术家首先挑选来自于自身视觉经验的源图像（基本来自于新闻照），接着以此图像为参考，在工作室中搭建情景再现的等比大小纸质模型，最后对复现场景进行拍照。在得到一张经过精密构图和透视设计的图像后，模型即被销毁。在这一叙事中，一张唯一的图像成为了整个复杂创作黑箱的最终提炼物。与此同时，对图像的理解和阐述也被进一步加工放大，从而建构了一种作为材料的脆弱且廉价的纸张与最终被呈现为人造奇观的图像间的张力。

而这种张力的另一端则要归功于照片制作工艺的极致堆砌。不同于杰夫·沃尔（Jeff Wall）的巨型灯箱，迪曼德为他所有的大幅面尺寸照片选择了迪亚塞克（Diasac）装裱技术，辅以铺满整个美术馆二层墙面的特殊壁纸。经过仔细布置的轨道灯阵下，透明、坚硬、平滑的超大面积亚克力表皮赋予了照片一种直观的物质感，让人联想起琥珀、珠宝、汽车烤漆、博物馆或商场里的玻璃展柜。亚克力与照片的全面贴合更进一步抹除了照片作为一种纸基印相（print）的表面质感，迫使其转化为纯粹、透明、完美的平面图像。而当作品的尺寸太大以至于无法被一次性印制完成时，亚克力下则遗留了照片拼接工艺若隐若现的图像接缝。你可以在诸如《演播室》（1997，183.5 × 349.5 cm）这样尺幅的早期作品中找到这些接缝。它们顽强地存在着，与画面中纸张的图像质感混在一起，形成层次丰富的互文。

This past summer, UCCA Edge presented a retrospective of the German conceptual artist Thomas Demand, exhibiting over 70 works in the form of photographs, moving image works and architectural wallpapers. The works on display spanned the artist's entire career, from the 1990s on, and included the large-scale photo installations that established Demand as an artist, the “Dailies” series of miniatures created since 2008, and his “Model Studies,” first begun in 2011.

One would easily be able to distinguish between experiencing Demand's photographic installations in an exhibition from viewing them in a catalogue, online, or in prints. Although the same set of visual data could be stored in the latter, certainly the true experience onsite transcended the conceptual, material, and capital makeup that naturally denies photography's scale. But Demand's large photographs quite literally offered us a vision into such a notion of scale. They led visitors on a journey of reading paintings. The audience's first impressions perhaps came from a banal scene of empty spatial constructions, each as straightforward as its title suggested: *Bathroom* (1997), *Gangway* (2001), *Office* (1995), *Refuge* (2021), and so on. Moving on, viewers were met by more details within the images, slowly unfolding,

assembling, and eventually reaching a transition point that dragged them into familiar and unfamiliar spectatorships. Instantly, as they realised that every corner was covered with paper, the paper became the skin; impressed upon the audience was an experience of witnessing the artist's total control over the images. It seemed so similar to studying large-scale paintings, where the slightest randomness is rejected. Viewers could only believe that everything, even the blank spaces and empty expanses, was carefully planned.

Much has been said about Demand's creative process for these images in text transcripts of past discussions and interviews. Even so, it is useful to review these narratives and locate the self-consistency in Demand's methodology. The artist would first select some source images from his own visual experience—for example, news—then piece these references together and create a scale model. He would then carefully study the perspectives and spatial relationships through a camera before destroying the model, and would finally reach a single image as the true replica—the ultimate representation of an idea. At the

same time, the complicated functions of images were further celebrated; in antithesis to the material's flimsiness and disposability, paper also became a crazily accessible render region for man-made spectacles.

Also evident were a rigorous pursuit of photographic technologies and treatments. Unlike Jeff Wall's giant transparencies in lightboxes, Demand's large-format photos were sealed under Diasac gel, complemented by special wallpapers that cover the entire wall of the second floor. With the help from the meticulously planned luminaire arrangements, the transparent, rigid, and glossy acrylic sheets on top allowed the photographs an irreducible and uninterrupted materiality reminiscent of amber, jewellery, lacquer on a car, glass display cases in museums or malls. The perfect bonding of acrylic to the photographs further distracted us from the textured surface of paper-based prints, as if the facade turned them into flawlessly flat images. When a photograph was too large to be printed on a single sheet, it was divided into individual parts that were then put together under the acrylic. We could possibly



托马斯·迪曼德，《控制室》，2011年，彩色合剂冲印、迪亚塞克工艺装裱，200 × 300 厘米
 图片致谢艺术家、Matthew Marks 画廊、Sprüth Magers 画廊、施博尔画廊（柏林）、Taka Ishii 画廊
 Thomas Demand, *Control Room*, 2011, C-print mounted on Diasac, 200 x 300 cm
 Courtesy the artist, Matthew Marks Gallery, Galerie Sprüth Magers, Esther Schipper Berlin, and Taka Ishii Gallery



托马斯·迪曼德，《避难所 II》，2021年，彩色合成冲印、迪亚塞克工艺装裱，160 x 200 厘米
 图片致谢艺术家、Matthew Marks 画廊、Sprüth Magers 画廊、施博尔画廊（柏林）、Taka Ishii 画廊

Thomas Demand, *Refuge II*, 2021, C-print mounted on Diasec, 160 x 200 cm
 Courtesy the artist, Matthew Marks Gallery, Galerie Sprüth Magers, Esther Schipper Berlin, and Taka Ishii Gallery

类似于《演播室》，迪曼德的许多巨幅照片都选择复现了一些大型空间。依照艺术家的说法，它们仍然是依照实际尺寸被等比例构建的，这无疑令人惊叹。在诸如《控制室》（2011，依照福岛核电站控制室复原）、《舷梯》（2001，依照教皇约翰·保罗二世到访统一后的柏林时下飞机的场景所构建）、《洞穴》（2006，使用 36 吨纸板建造）等对大型空间复原的照片中，墙壁、天花板、悬空结构真实存在。纸，即便是卡纸，作为一种廉价与强度不可兼得的材料，也实在不适合承担起全部的重任，而这些细微的破绽仿佛照片的“指示性”（indexiality）执意对叙事进行了又一次暗中破坏。它驱使我们想象，纸的下面又是什么？铺满美术馆整个二层空间的墙纸和在四层为“避难所”系列（2021）所建造的临时性木结构墙体，则多少代表了艺术家自己的回答。

在对艺术劳动的叙事与极致工艺的共同支撑下，迪曼德的照片悬浮在美术馆的墙面上，成为了某种艺术资本市场语境下“夸富宴”的借尸还魂。需要购买门票而得见的昂贵精美的当代摄影艺术藏品正如一辆辆纯手工打造的超级跑车，等到展览结束，展品打包寄回，除了

find these seams in early works such as *Studio* (1997, 183.5 x 349.5 cm). But the seams persisted. So did the texture of prints that were framed beneath the same gloss, reminding each of the other's presence in a well-layered composition.

Similar to *Studio*, several spaces were chosen to be represented by large-scale photos. According to the artist, each was built to the same scale as the actual sizes, which is certainly amazing. In other works, such as *Control Room* (2011, based on the control room of the Fukushima nuclear power plant), *Gangway* (2001, based on the scene of Pope John Paul II disembarking from a plane during his visit to a unified Berlin) and *Cave* (2006, constructed out of 36 tons of cardboard), the walls, ceilings, and suspended structures were all real. Paper, and even cardboard, might seem either too fragile or too banal to hold the dense narratives. However, their intrinsic vulnerabilities

were not absolutes; these qualities were indexicals (an expression whose meaning can change according to contexts) that undermined the perpetuating power within fixed narrativity. The indexicality led us to question: what was covered behind these materials? The wallpaper that covered the second floor and the temporary timber wall structures for the “Refuge” series (2021) on the fourth floor offered us Demand’s answer.

Although supported by an organised assemblage of artistic labour and fine craftsmanship, Demand’s photographs on the walls became a contemporary sign of “potlatch” in the capitalistic context of the art scene. A contemporary collection of photography, expensively and exquisitely crafted and displayed, became comparable to the equally fetishizable objects (such as hand-built supercars) after a series of debatably righteous rituals: exhibitions investing heavily in site-specific artworks that would be removed and packed away right after the show, and celebrating the experience with audiences who would only be welcome if they purchased entry tickets. Besides the one-off tickets, the visitors were at

most gifted with exhibition pamphlets, photo documentation and a so-called “distributed experience” of the exhibition. This echoed precisely the rationale behind Demand’s dioramas for production/reproduction of images—the act of documenting became a ritualised symptom, and the image, as a focus of infection, was sublimated into a perfect facade for emptiness.

Let us return to the works. Telling Chinese audiences that the photographs in the exhibition were derived from news images would not help them establish an instant rapport with the displayed matters. From the German politician Uwe Barschel’s death in *Bathroom* (1997), to Slobodan Milošević’s lectern in *Podium* (2000), to Saddam Hussein’s *Kitchen* (2004), the original news images could not be easily found in Chinese search engines. A possible explanation was that the news content varied according to contexts and discourses abroad. But even for Anglo-European audiences, the visual clues to some of the photographs were similarly untraceable. In a Chinese context, Demand’s images were completely severed from the chained indexical references, morphing into a



托马斯·迪曼德，《工作室》，2014年，彩色合成冲印、迪亚塞克工艺装裱，240 x 341 厘米
 图片致谢艺术家、Matthew Marks 画廊、Sprüth Magers 画廊、施博尔画廊（柏林）、Taka Ishii 画廊

Thomas Demand, *Atelier*, 2014, C-print mounted on Diasec, 240 x 341 cm
 Courtesy the artist, Matthew Marks Gallery, Galerie Sprüth Magers, Esther Schipper Berlin, and Taka Ishii Gallery

票根和宣传册，观众能留下的便只有在现场拍摄的照片和各自分得的奇观记忆。这恰恰和迪曼德的纸模型照片在图像的生产/再生产逻辑上如出一辙——“拍照”成为一种仪式化的症候，而“图像”作为病灶则升华成完满的空洞符号。

让我们再次回到图像。即便被告知迪曼德展览中所出现的照片“依据现实新闻图片”而来，这些图像在很大程度上也仍然无法与中国观众的视觉经验直接对接。从德国政客乌维·巴舍尔（Uwe Barschel）遇刺的《浴室》（1997），到斯洛博丹·米洛舍维奇（Slobodan Milosevic）的《演讲台》（2000），再到萨达姆的《厨房》（2004），与作品相关的原始新闻图片干脆无法在中文搜索引擎中索引到。这里当然有国内外不同的新闻报道语境的影响，但即便对于欧美的观众来说，部分照片的视觉线索也同样是无迹可寻的，“归根结底，谁能记得萨达姆·侯赛因的厨房的内景呢？”¹在中文语境下，迪曼德的图像则被彻底切断了视觉的索引链条，化身为更加完美的能指幽灵，漂浮在图像和信息的局域海洋中。

你可能从未听说过加济梅斯坦演讲，并对其内容或政治意义一无所知，但你一定会记住悬浮在白色演讲台之上的巨大宣传板和其上的年份数字，记住这幅悬浮在美术馆墙面上的巨幅亚克力装裱照片。而通过阅读展览文本，一种新的“图像/奇观—文本/资本—事件/历史”线索被建构起来。从迪曼德的这张照片出发，联系到当下的国内与国际新闻事件，再回到中国与西方语境下的新闻报道图像。“历史的结舌”如此回应“房间中的大象”。这也在提醒我们，图像与历史之间的关系从来就不是一览无余的。和展示在白盒子中灵光焕发的照片装置一样，新闻摄影也从来不曾真的成为过“透明的媒介”，即便它一如既往地如此宣称拥有这一美德。对于任何事件而言，什么需要被拍下，什么又需要被传播和观看，从来就不是一个中性问题。

三楼展厅所展示的小幅手机摄影照片恰好构成迪曼德的某种自觉回应。从2008年起持续至今，艺术家制作这些模仿生活快照的模型，并转而采用完全不同于以往的制作方式——手机拍摄，小尺寸染料转印（dye transfer），装框装裱。这些“小”照片显然更容易与观者建立起亲密的关系，亦折射出迪曼德对于自上世纪末以来集体的图像意识和生产逻辑转向的思考。经由信息技术革命，图像仿佛彻底剥去了其物质和技术基础，

perfect signifier—a floating ghost in the local field of mass images and information.

It wouldn't matter if you had heard of the Gazimestan speech or its political significance. You might certainly recall the huge backdrop containing the insignia and dating the beginning and end of the battle of Kosovo, as well as this large-scale acrylic framed photograph suspended on the wall of the museum. By reading the curatorial texts, you would also encounter the reconstruction of a new thread linking “image-spectacle”, “text-capital” and “event-history”. In *Podium*, you were led to find the parallelism of current national or international events and the news images that were included in texts under different socio-political contexts. “The Stutter of History” thus responded to the “elephant in the room”, reminding us of the incapability of images' full representation of critical events in history. Like the radiant photographic installations in a white cube, photojournalism has never really been as transparent a visual medium as it always claimed. The question of what to be photographed, circulated, and viewed is also never unbiased.

Demand's small-scale mobile photography on the third floor reflected his consciousness of such questions. He has been reconstructing quotidian moments through model replicas and taking photographs in the same manner since 2008, but with a different tool and printing method—he took the photos with his smartphone, printed them with dye-transfer and framed them individually. The small photographs were clearly more evocative and tangible for the audience to participate in Demand's thoughts on the shift of collective consciousness and production logic of images since the end of the last century. It seems that image production has been stripped of their material and technical difficulties and instead became easily reproduced, counterfeited, distributed, and consumed in large quantities without enormous cost. In an age where images are too available for manipulation and exploitation, visuals with overdone sharpness, saturation, and compositional planning on social media platforms such as RED, TikTok, and Instagram, or even in papers like



Thomas Demand, *Daily #15*, 2011, framed dye transfer print, 73.8 x 59 cm
Courtesy the artist, Matthew Marks Gallery, Galerie Sprüth Magers, Esther Schipper Berlin, and Taka Ishii Gallery

托马斯·迪曼德，《日常#15》，2011年，裱框染料转印，73.8 x 59厘米
图片致谢艺术家、Matthew Marks画廊、Sprüth Magers画廊、施博尔画廊（柏林）、Taka Ishii画廊

可以被无成本且不限量的大量生产、复制、传播、消费。在图像生产/操控手段唾手可得的年代，无论是在小红书、抖音、instagram 或是纽约时报上，具有锐利边缘、明亮色彩、精准构图的高质量图像越发被认为是不可信的。这反过来又为理解迪曼德的大幅摄影装置及其与更广义的图像文化之间的关系提供了另一个思路。

The New York Times, could be unreliable. Such insights might provide another way of reading Demand's architectonic photo installations and their connections with the broader visual culture.

张瀚文是一名影像艺术家和研究者，现生活工作于长春和上海两地。基于摄影与视频/电影，他的创作关注静态与动态图像的媒介特性、技术轨迹、物质基础以及它们与意识形态和日常生活的纠缠。

Zhang Hanwen is an artist and filmmaker based in Changchun and Shanghai. By capturing photographs and video/film, Zhang's practice reflects on the technological trajectory and physical existence of images as well as their entanglement with ideologies and daily activities.

Translated by Harriet Min Zhang

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