

MIKA ROTTENBERG



SNEEZE
打喷嚏

SNEE≡E 乞嘍

SOLO EXHIBITION BY
MIKA ROTTENBERG 個展

CURATOR 策展人 Tobias Berger



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儘管矛盾無處不在，能置身其中也許是最引人入勝的事。在全球化高速發展的背景下，香港數十年來一直扮演著中介的角色。身處所謂「東方」和「西方」之間——過去曾是大英帝國的殖民地，現在則是中華人民共和國的特別行政區；其地位不僅是一個城市甚至轄區，卻亦非一個自治國家；主要語言雖是廣東話，但英語和普通話也經常使用，而政府亦不斷在管治和問責之間徘徊。加上地處東南亞邊緣，卻緊靠著無論生產力和創意都有出色表現的另一特區，即使昔日香港對這一河之隔的地方繁榮曾有所貢獻，如今也不得不與之一較高下。

Mika Rottenberg 的作品也聚焦於這種介於兩者的矛盾。她所探索的生產過程，由昏暗的工廠開始，最後成為遍佈世界的「一元店」。這些生產過程常常刻意使工人、供應商、產品、商人和消費者之間明顯脫節。這一切都發生於當今世界：我們必須不斷省思有關生產、交易和消費的理論與關係；同時，新物質主義提倡一種批判的唯物論，關注晚期資本主義和氣候變化對全球各地的影響；也是在當代，我們得面對「人類世」的後果，這個地質年代標誌著人類對地球的地質和生態系統的重大影響，其中包括但不限於人為的氣候變化。

這些矛盾集中於 Mika Rottenberg 的電影內，卻沒有直接衝突，也沒有合併為一，就像出現於漫長的「幽靈鬼屋」之旅那些栩栩如生的幽靈，可以說是超現實主義「精緻屍體」遊戲的電影版。這些矛盾並列存在，通過延伸的隧道和走廊相連，彼此並置，就像電影的場景同時發生在不同地點，然後交互剪接。她對人物和故事的運用手法總是充滿幽默，但對分佈各處、互相依存的關係所隱含的嚴肅意義，卻沒有加以取笑。她的影片往往質疑正在發生的事情，還有這些事情在甚麼地方相互結合，如何交錯，事物之間又如何互相影響，都與今天過度全球化的後資本主義和後共產主義世界非常相似：貨物流通各大洲的過程，就如權勢人士和超級大國所把玩的政治棋局一般撲朔迷離。

她的作品常傳達令人出乎意料的神奇，或描述看似莫名其妙的魔力。不僅在她作品的場景內，而且在對下一步變化的猜疑和期待中，始終有一份緊張感，有點像看了齣稱心滿意的恐怖片，雖緊張懸疑，卻沒有暴力的黑暗張力。這種情緒不單是由精心製作的舞台佈景和特寫鏡頭所引起，也是由於 Mika Rottenberg 對 ASMR (自主感官經絡反應) 很感興趣，一再運用與之相關的音響效果。ASMR 是指某種聲音、圖像或印象所引起的發麻感覺，從頭皮開始，移至後頸和脊椎。海綿摩擦麥克風，指甲刮擦塑料，液體在容器中緩慢流動——這些全都被超高頻的咪高峰錄下來，並以極大特寫拍攝，常配以色彩鮮豔的畫面。過去十年左右，在互聯網上用 ASMR 刺激感覺的影片日益增多。這些影片常能令人放鬆、或刺激神經，好像真的會令人坐立不安，有些的觀看次數高達數百萬。對 Mika Rottenberg 來

說，由物質直接引起身體的感覺，跟這些影片直率親密的拍攝方式，同樣令人著迷。這類影片都是利用聲音和物料產生或大或小的張力，例如向外撕扯，表面撕裂，或把薯片壓碎。這種深刻的滿足卻稍帶不安的感覺，永遠存在於其他事物的邊緣和交界點上，也可適用於她的所有作品。無論是從隱喻和象徵的角度而言，這種動力也會激發觀眾陶醉於這世界的矛盾之中，也許，還可藉此提升對當代生存境況的洞察和自覺。

文：Tobias Berger

Contradictions abound—and being in the middle of them may very well be most fascinating. Hong Kong has for decades served as an intermediary node amid the backdrop of an accelerating globalisation. It is this intermediary between what we [once] call(ed) “East” and “West”, with its colonial past as part of the British Empire and its present as a Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China, with the status of being more than just another city or even territory but less than an autonomous country, with the dominance of spoken Cantonese paired with the regular use of English and Putonghua, with its government torn between administration and accountability, and its geographical position on the edge of Southeast Asia and yet next to one of the most productive and innovative places in the world, a place Hong Kong had a hand in making thrive and with which it also now competes.

This in-between presence of contradictions also comes under the focus of Mika Rottenberg’s work. Her oeuvre explores production processes that originate in dim sweatshops and end in generic “dollar shops” found all over the world, processes that betray an obvious and often willful disconnection and alienation between labourers, suppliers, products, merchants, and consumers. All this lies in a contemporary world where we must constantly re-think theories and interrelations of production, exchange, and consumption, where New Materialism advocates a critical materialist attention to distributed global influences of late capitalism and of climate change, where we face a reckoning with the Anthropocene, a geological epoch that marks significant human impact on Earth’s geology and ecosystems, including—but not limited to—anthropogenic climate change.

Like a filmic version of the surrealist game of exquisite corpse played in a long haunted house ride, these contradictions come together in Mika Rottenberg’s films without directly colliding or coalescing. They exist side by side, they connect via extended tunnels and corridors, they are juxtaposed one next to another, much as scenes in films that happen simultaneously in different locations and later interconnect. Her use of characters and stories is always humorous without making fun of the serious undertone of these

scattered relationships and dependencies. One often questions what is going on, where and how these things intermesh, and how one thing affects another—very similar to today’s over-globalised post-capitalistic/post-communist world, where the intercontinental movement of goods often appears as mysterious as the political chess of various powers and superpowers.

Her works often convey or depict the magic of the unexpected or the [superficially] inexplicable. There exists a constant tension, not only in the scenes within her works but also in the brooding expectation of what will happen next, somewhat like a gratifying horror movie, suspenseful yet without the dark tension of violence. This mood is generated not only by the elaborate stage sets and close-up shots but also by Mika Rottenberg’s fascination with and repeated use of ASMR-inflected sounds. ASMR, or Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response, refers to the sensations—or “tingles”—that run through the back of someone’s head and spine in response to a certain sound or image or impression. A sponge rubbed against a microphone, fingernails scratching plastic, or a liquid rolling slowly in a container—all this is recorded with super high-frequency microphones and filmed in extreme closeups, often in bright colours. For the past decade or so this has been a growing genre, with ASMR-inducing videos on the internet that are often deeply relaxing, simulating, and yet deceptively disturbing, some of which are watched millions of times. For Mika Rottenberg this direct trigger between the material and the body is as fascinating as the immediate and intimate way these videos are filmed. They all pose a volatile tension with sounds and materials, like an outward rip, a surface tear, or a crack of a potato chip. This deeply satisfying yet disturbing sense, permanently on edge and on the cusp of something else, may very well be said of all of Mika Rottenberg’s works. Metaphorically and symbolically, this momentum also provokes the viewer to revel in the contradictions of our world and, perhaps, gain an insight or awareness into the paradoxes of contemporary existence.

by Tobias Berger

《星際發電機》

2017 | 單頻錄像裝置(有聲、彩色) | 26分鐘36秒

© Mika Rottenberg | 鳴謝藝術家及豪瑟沃斯

《星際發電機》透過衝擊眼球的視覺語言，思考當代過多的物質以及令人疲乏的國際經貿流動。作品出奇地連接不同時空，融混真實與虛構、誤傳與真確。

錄像作品呈現出一個邊城上的奇幻異境：加州的中國餐館和街頭小販，跟內地市場內幾乎要被繽紛得令人窒息的貨物吞噬的店家，看似活在平行時空，互不關聯。但作品同時展現了另一個層面：貨物、由人扮成的墨西哥餡餅、以及某種眼看不見的神秘力量，正在穿過隧道與門廊，將世界用異樣的方式打通。弔詭的場面接續出現：兩個在隧道爬行的人在一個牆破水流的小室會面、推車小販在邊境上如風來去、路人注視時餐碟竟接通另一個維度的世界。《星際發電機》由此揭開未知世界裏真相與虛構的暗中聯繫——然而，最後它還是關注著某種當代獨有的魔幻感。

COSMIC GENERATOR 星際發電機 COSMIC GENERATOR 星際發電機

COSMIC GENERATOR

2017 | Single-channel video installation [sound, colour] | 26'36"

© Mika Rottenberg | Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth

With Mika Rottenberg's impactful visual language, *Cosmic Generator* playfully thinks through today's overabundance of goods and its exhausting flow of global trade. The work forges unexpected connections of time and space, as well as melding fact and fiction, misinformation and earnestness.

The video presents a fantastical scene in a border town: Chinese restaurants and street vendors in Calexico are juxtaposed alongside storefronts inside Chinese wholesale markets, swallowed up by suffocating quantities of goods. These all seem to exist in parallel universes with no apparent connections. Yet at the same time, the work reveals another level of commodities, of people dressed up as quesadillas—and of a mysterious power invisible to the human eye passing through tunnels and corridors, opening up and bridging the world in a peculiar way. A succession of strange scenes ensues: two people crawling inside different tunnels ultimately meet up inside a flooded room with a broken wall; cart-pushing street vendors come and go like the wind along the border; and under the watchful eye of passers-by, dishes being sold lead to another dimension. *Cosmic Generator* thus quirkily unveils real and fictional hidden connections that undergird our world—yet in the end it also insists on a certain magic particular to contemporary life.

《沒有鼻子知道》

2015 | 單頻錄像裝置(有聲、彩色) | 21分鐘58秒

© Mika Rottenberg | 鳴謝Mike and Kaitlyn Krieger收藏

《沒有鼻子知道》給尋常刻版的工廠樓房與生產線賦予奇異色彩，巧妙地它們化成悅目驚喜，同時夾雜對當代生產和勞動條件的議論。將當代的勞動處境幻化成驚喜不絕的影像作品。《沒有鼻子知道》是 Mika Rottenberg 初次到訪內地考察後的成果，展現了她獨特的想像，大膽有力地結合幻想與現實。

影片拍攝一個魁梧女人，坐在小型的風車裝置前不停吸入花粉，直至她會打噴嚏——並且噴出一碟又一碟的麵條。而風車裝置的另一端，就有一個女工轉動滑輪；她與身邊製作人工珍珠的女工們一樣，無休無止地重覆著相同的動作，成為貨物生產鏈的其中一個環節。《沒有鼻子知道》沒有跌入陳套，便捷地評論工廠體制與大規模量產；藝術家在此反而建構出可信、主觀的視角，察看箇中室內空間、人手作業、器械的細節，帶出當代工業勞動的弔詭魅力。

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NONOSEKNOWS

2015 | Single-channel video installation [sound, colour] | 21'58"

© Mika Rottenberg | Courtesy of Mike and Kaitlyn Krieger Collection

With its outlandish and colourful scenes, *NoNoseKnows* transforms stereotypical factory buildings and production lines into occasions of delightful surprise while commenting cleverly on contemporary conditions of labour and exchange. Arising from Mika Rottenberg's experiences during her first research visit in China, *NoNoseKnows* demonstrates Mika Rottenberg's unique imagination and daring juxtapositions that convincingly fuse fantasy and realism.

The work presents a burly, well-built woman sitting in front of a small windmill contraption. She keeps breathing in pollen—until she sneezes and ejects platefuls of pasta. At the other end of the contraption, a female worker below rotates a pulley; like the adjacent female workers producing farmed pearls, the worker is engaged in an endless cycle of repetitive motion, a mere link in the production chain of commodities. Instead of reverting to an all-too-easy critique of the factory system and mass production, *NoNoseKnows* opens up an authentic subjective proposition by the artist, and hones in on the interior spaces, manual labour, and details of the machinery, thereby shedding light on the paradoxes of contemporary industrial labour.

《意粉區塊鏈》

2019 | 單頻錄像裝置(有聲、彩色) | 18分鐘15秒

© Mika Rottenberg | 鳴謝藝術家及豪瑟沃斯

《意粉區塊鏈》創造出豐富多姿的感官經驗，給物件賦予不同的質地與屬性，散發出令人迷惑目眩的吸引力。影片以圖瓦歌手在草原上表演喉音唱法作引子，低迴延綿的音聲過渡到攝影棚裏多個以顏色、形狀、聲響別扭地刺激著觀眾的場面，包括切割及融化充滿彈性的啫喱、壓碎架疊起來的意粉、喧鬧地把玩七彩珠子。藝術家從個別細小的物件，再引伸至大型強子對撞機和薯仔收割機等先進機器，不依循表面邏輯地將物件的世界連結起來。

作品並不把物件當成是「死物」，反映出 Mika Rottenberg 眼中的「新物質主義」思想；它們好像各有獨自的生命與個性，但同時間亦或多或少主動地彼此秘密相連。

作品的聲音處理也值得留意，藝術家除了突顯物品的特性之外，也精心編排和錄製不同材質可能發出的聲音，誘發觀眾在聽覺上有愉悅、平時難以體驗的ASMR(自主感官經絡反應)觸感。

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SPAGHETTI BLOCKCHAIN

2019 | Single-channel video installation [sound, colour] | 18'15"

© Mika Rottenberg | Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth

With its rich, sensorial experiences, *Spaghettic Blockchain* imbues objects with contrasting materialities and textures, with the work exuding a hypnotising and dazzling allure. The film starts off with a Tuvan singer throat-singing on the grasslands. As the low echoing and continuous sound transitions to various scenes in a film studio, the latter offers up a series of actions that oddly stimulates the audience through colours, shapes, and acoustics—including cutting and melting a bouncy jelly, crushing stacks of spaghetti, and noisily playing with colourful beads. The artist begins with specific, miniscule objects, and then extends to advanced equipment such as Large Hadron Colliders and potato harvesters, linking the material world together in a way that goes against apparent logic.

Enacting a “new materialism” in the eyes of Mika Rottenberg, the video does not present things as mere “inanimate objects”; they may to varying degrees all have some form of agency in their secret interconnections, as though they all have unique lives and characteristics. Also noteworthy is the meticulous treatment of sound: aside from foregrounding the peculiar material characteristics of each object, the soundtrack also incites pleasing and elusive ASMR [Automated Sensory Meridien Responses] effects in the viewer.

《乞嗆》

2012 | 單頻錄像裝置(有聲、彩色) | 3分鐘2秒

© Mika Rottenberg | 鳴謝藝術家及豪瑟沃斯

幾個臉上都長著誇張大紅鼻子的男人，輪流打噴嚏將兔子、生肉、燈泡等等噴落在檯面；《乞嗆》(粵語詞語，意為「打噴嚏」)用上重覆的形式和極簡的內容，創作出一個荒誕怪想的錄像。Mika Rottenberg 運用剪接的「掩眼法」——連結鏡頭與鏡頭之間看似風馬牛不相及的元素——與不同質地的畫面與聲效湊拼(毛茸茸的兔子、鏗鏘落地的燈泡、吱噠抓緊地板的赤腳)，借鑑經典的電影語言來作新嘗試。

事實上，這個作品指涉著1894年的「Fred Ott's Sneeze」，這個五秒鐘打噴嚏的片段，是用愛迪生發明的攝影機製作、首部正式取得版權的電影。Mika Rottenberg 的作品重新詮釋了這個古老影片，以當代角度探索工作、性別、「分泌」之間的關聯。藝術家三年後在《沒有鼻子知道》，進一步發展「打噴嚏」的主題。

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SNEEZE

2012 | Single-channel video installation [sound, colour] | 3'2"

© Mika Rottenberg | Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Men with exaggeratingly large red noses sneeze, one after another, ejecting an odd assortment of objects on a tabletop—rabbits, raw meat, lightbulbs, among others. *Sneeze*, an absurdist, whimsical video work, constructs surreal scenarios by means of minimal content and formal repetition. The “camouflage” of film editing—connecting seemingly random elements across shots—as well as the collages of images and sounds [the crisp clash of lightbulbs striking a surface, or the bare feet making the floor squeak] also constitute a formal experimental reference to the classic language of film. Indeed, this video work harks back to early cinema, in particular to *Fred Ott's Sneeze* [1894], a five-second-long clip that depicts Fred Ott, Thomas Edison's assistant, sneezing; the film is also the oldest surviving film with a copyright. Inspired by this classic work, Mika Rottenberg makes the connections between “labour”, gender, and “excretions” from a contemporary perspective. The theme of sneezing is further elaborated in Rottenberg's later work *NoNoseKnows*.



Mika Rottenberg 簡介

Mika Rottenberg 出生於阿根廷，成長於以色列，現定居紐約。她結合影片、裝置和雕塑，創作引人入勝而嚴謹的藝術作品，常涉及當代超資本主義世界的生產、商業和價值。她的藝術實踐參考了電影和雕塑手法，聯繫迥然不同的物件和地方；並以嚴格的剪接技術，編織出精緻奇幻的視覺敘事，往往帶有顛覆力量。

Rottenberg 曾獲 2019 年 Kurt Schwitters 獎，該獎項表彰在當代藝術領域貢獻重大的藝術家。她在世界各地舉辦過許多個展，包括在紐約新博物館、芝加哥當代藝術博物館、巴黎東京宮等。

About Mika Rottenberg

Mika Rottenberg, of Argentine and Israeli origins and currently based in New York, engages in an arresting yet rigorous artistic practice that combines film, installation, and sculpture. Her body of work has often dealt with production, commerce, and value in our contemporary hyper-capitalist world. Referencing cinematic and sculptural practices, she makes connections between disparate objects and places; with a rigorous editing technique, the artist weaves elaborate and fantastical visual narratives that have a subversive edge.

Rottenberg was the recipient of the 2019 Kurt Schwitters Prize, which recognises artists who have made a significant contribution to the field of contemporary art. She has had a number of solo exhibitions around the world, including at New Museum, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and Palais de Tokyo, Paris; among others.

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