

內動的島

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在金門與廈門中間的海，有一條看不見的線。這個線之所以「有」，是一個複雜的故事。海上船隻可以在方位儀上看到這條肉眼不可見的線，透過的是衛星科技的虛擬定位。但，假使有人肉身泳渡這條看不見的線，或是一艘船越過這個看不見的液體疆界，那麼這個肉身或船身，就會讓加諸在海波浪上的隱形政治疆界，顯現。

這條海景上不可見的線，是藝術家蔡國傑新作〈航道〉的核心。寫稿的同時，我的音響播放著 Taylor Swift 的新歌 The smallest man，歌裡唱到一句情歌常見的控訴（你看看你做了什麼），而在這首歌裡控訴透過英文的 in plain sight 陳述出來（人人都看到你做了什麼）。Taylor Swift 景觀化的 pop 敘事中，「肉眼可見」這件事，變成了一種生命倫理：昭昭自明的那種肉眼道德；所見即是。但生命政治，特別是冷戰留在海洋、肉身、甚至是船身裡的界線，挑戰的正是這種 in plain sight 的倫理。〈航道〉作品所在的舞台，是金廈海域。軍事化的海洋在島嶼堆疊的碉堡、槍砲、禁區標示、統戰標示裡所見即是。但對於長居金門的人，日日與海洋這個巨大的水體共生，人們所面對的事實是可見疆界與不可見疆界的錯雜共存。戰爭是記憶，是故事，也同時是荒廢的碉堡。戰爭也是那條看不見的台海中線，以及接近這條虛擬線時的緊張氣氛。看不見的國家疆界存在於我們的意識裡；前線則是一種又近又遠的生命政治。It is not in plain sight。

蔡國傑 2024 年的〈航道〉，讓這個肉眼不可見的疆界，以及這些疆界所涉及的生命政治，浮上我們眼前。透過藝術家的美學行動，〈航道〉滑入政治與資本界線滿布的海洋，隨著人類與非人類的身體，在邊界與邊界間，航行移動。這件作品重新被召喚了隱藏在不可見景象之下的冷戰鬼魂，以及金門和廈門日常裡時近時遠的國家；影像通過美學行動介入了劃定疆界的技術，還有與疆界關聯的政治機構（apparatus）。另一方面，我們看到蔡國傑的藝術實踐中長期關注的界線測量與量測技術，而在 2024 的新作中，土地政

治與生命政治的糾葛又隨著藝術家自己的生命往海洋、波浪去。涉水而入的，是穿越的企圖，和某種透過植物與海洋生物，來進行生命佔領的新模式。藝術家的影像重新召喚（reenactment）疆界又同時超越疆界，讓我們看到被限制的生命與超越限制的空間縫隙。〈航道〉不只挑戰疆界在新冷戰裡應當是無生命存活景象的預設，更讓我們看到飄浮於金廈中線海洋上的蚵田；在人為的生命政治禁區，保麗龍養殖器物的置入持續的產出非人類的異質越界。我們對於疆界的控制慾望，以及國家對於邊界的武裝，又怎麼抵擋海洋被資本化的慾望？或國家與資本，兩者本來就存在著共謀關係？

蔡國傑的藝術行動，向來都追問這些困難的問題，亦即生命政治怎麼可能、與不可能的問題。2004 年便開始的《半田計劃》和 2019-2020 年間的〈家園〉藝術行動中，藝術家透過購買「地籍線」而非「地籍」，逆轉我們對土地所有權的既有意象，挑戰我們對於土地私有權這個似乎已然是 in plain sight 的資本獨佔倫理。透過在歐洲徵集難民，讓他們從自身流離失所的經驗裡重新被繪製出家園的記憶，〈家園〉再次提出了有關「家」意象的複雜經驗。所有的地籍買賣都涉及到土地「測量」必須把實際世界裡的空間經驗與土地使用實況，化約成平整的、抽象的資本價值；但土地所有權本身的抽象數值，卻永遠不可能平整貼合複雜的、人實際生活的歷史空間，以及人與空間發生的複雜生命經驗，這些都無法以金錢對價、並任意轉手販賣。對流離失所的難民來說，過去的家園、記憶裡真正有意義裡的家，又怎麼能以地籍圖這種國家與資本技術，被控制、抽象化、然後轉手呢？蔡國傑透過《半田計劃》和〈家園〉兩個藝術行動，持續讓這些所有權界線裡交織著的生命政治、資本化約政治、與國界政治間的不平整，在我們的眼前顯現。

這個顯現，牽涉到的不僅是 not in plain sight 的資本政治；蔡國傑的作品更具象化了女性主義物理學者 Karen Barad 所關切的「內動」新物質理論。以地籍線問地籍、以地籍間的縫隙灰塵去問「土地」到底意味何事，都以高度表演性的行動，將物質重新原子化、讓定義這些物質本質的關聯性政治與軌道，重新被召喚出來。作為當代重要的女性主義物理學者，Karen Barad 顛覆了自笛卡爾以降，我們對物理與物質現象本質上可從「物自身」進行探問的既有態度。包括我們所知的元子、中子、電子等。Karen Barad 之所以說這些物質的本質應該以「內動」的途徑理解，強調的是既有社會和政治概念，都已然內在於我們對物質的基本認識；再者，1910 年代波爾物理學以及隨後的量子力學對光子、電子、原子這些物質性的基本模型，皆取決於物質與空間的動態關係，例如電子只能在某些特定能量值的軌道上運動。換句話說，「物與物的關聯性」構成了物質，這些關聯性決定了物質與能量的存在，是物質存有的必要條件、而非僅是一種外部的互動。Karen

Barad 的新物質理論幫助我們看到物質的存有仰賴內動關係 (intra-active relations)，而這些關係是一種動態的交織。蔡國傑的藝術行動，相當程度上呼應了這樣的新物質論，幾個藝術計畫揭露的是島與島間的生命政治；即便說金廈海域水面上的國界是隱而不見，透過藝術介入、則讓這些政治與軍事力量的內動動態，顯現。譬如，一個台灣人的身體或一艘台灣船的船體，滑過這個隱形的疆界，則會召喚出武裝主權、國家、資本、軍事、戰爭，這些場域裡肉眼往往不可見的物質關係。

此次《潮壤相接》展出的兩件作品〈航道〉和〈垂直土地〉，都讓我們看到蔡國傑透過藝術介入，讓生命政治與生存韌性得以被看見。海洋中線的生物、糾纏的定位儀與保麗龍浮標、瓊麻與播音器給框出來的敵國景緻，皆以藝術分子化的精細美學被顯現，而得以浮出檯面。

植物、海生物、內動的島

這些生命政治摩擦的軌道，更是當代生態藝術和生態女性主義，心心念念的問題。在〈垂直土地〉這個作品裡，我們看到藝術家徵集村民，一起在岌岌可危的紅土陡坡上、半傾倒碉堡前，種植瓊麻。如蔡國傑自述，瓊麻這個外來物種，在 20 世紀初引進台灣；作為一種強韌的固土植物，瓊麻往往成為了軍事化基礎建設的一環，是戰爭地景中常見的植物。種植瓊麻也成為了島嶼戰事將起的第一個預言性行動。2013 年起，廈門在大嶝、小嶝之間興建廈門翔安國際機場，機場的填海造陸工程大量需求砂石，中國抽砂船長期出沒於金廈海上，海岸砂石被大量抽取，卻也造成金門海岸線嚴重地層下陷；金門東北岸這個下陷狀況則是特別嚴峻。

〈垂直土地〉以瓊麻為核心，修補國土流失的金門島海岸。面對著傾塌的碉堡，藝術家與民眾一起種植這個比人類更強韌的物種，透過非人物種的力量，面對岌岌可危的歷史處境，引發寓意深遠的藝術行動。植物挑戰了視覺藝術對於媒材美學控制的慾望，植物本身的生命延展並與環境產生關係、也意味著這個媒材具有逃逸藝術家控制的潛能。但植物不受控的生命力，也讓當代藝術在不同的場域中，透過植物介入，創造出超越人類中心的美學嘗試。植物緩慢但強韌的生命，以及其所附著的土與水分，再次追問當代藝術美學架高於地球危機之外的基本預設。

Precious Okoyomon 2022 年在威尼斯雙年展所展出的「葛 (Kudzu)」藤蔓爬滿展間，製造出一個沈重、陰暗、潮濕、並且持續延展改變中的展間生態藝術 (Batsaki 2024)¹。藝術學者 Yota Batsaki 便藉著討論這個作品，延伸

當代藝術如何能透過非人類的物種，連結遷徙、殖民、戰爭、種族空間等複雜歷史議題。將活生生的植物作品、會改變的生物，帶入當代藝術講求高度掌控的白盒子，讓植物佔領藝術空間，讓植物本身的生命政治與環境產生關係，更創造出一種美學政治的內在張力，讓當代藝術離開文藝復興以來，景觀畫浪漫主義畫框式美學對於自然的佔有與控制。以植物為媒材的藝術行動反過來，讓環境與歷史中已然與人類交纏的非人物種，展現出這個世界、這個地球上、環境與生態流變的內動現實。

潮壤之間，蔡國傑帶我們進入內動的島，也進入以植物為核心的新美學行動，透過已然與戰爭交織的瓊麻生命，探問美學控制與生態張力。這些非人物種帶領我們，走到泥土之下、游入台海中線，看到內動的島之間，隱隱浮現一條離開人類中心的新水路。

1. Precious Okoyomon 2022 威尼斯雙年展的作品，全名為 *To See the Earth before the End of the World*，收錄於第 59 屆威尼斯雙年展 (La Biennale di Venezia), "The Milk of Dreams." 有關 Yota Batsaki 的全文，見 Yota Batsaki, 'The Plant at the End of the World: Precious Okoyomon's Invasive Art,' *Critical Inquiry*, vol.50 No.4: 585-609 (2024)

Intra-active Islands

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In the sea between Kinmen and Xiamen, an invisible line cuts through the often serene water.. The reason why this line “exists” is a complex story. Ships at sea can see this invisible line on the azimuth through the virtual positioning of satellite technology. However, if someone swims across this invisible line in person, or if a ship crosses this liquid, unseen boundary, then this flesh or the hull will make the hidden political boundaries imposed on the waves of the sea visible.

This invisible line on the seascape lies at the heart of artist Cai Guo-Jie's 2024 new work *Fairway*. As I write this piece, my stereo is letting out Taylor Swift's new song *The smallest man*. She sings about a common indictment found in many love songs (see what you did) and in the lyrics the indictment is underlined by the phrase “in plain sight” (everyone saw what you did). Taylor Swift's pop song points to a kind of ethics bestowed by visibility. What is in plain sight often insinuates things being self-evident. It hints on a kind of optic morality of visibility: what you see is what you get. Yet it is hardly the case when it comes to traces of the Cold War left in the sea, in the flesh, and even in the hull of ships, which cannot be found in plain sight and thus challenges the ethics of seeing is believing. *Fairway* is staged on the sea between Kinmen and Xiamen, the two frontline counties of Taiwan and the People's Republic of China respectively. The militarized sea can be seen in the stacked bunkers, guns, restricted area signs, and united front signs on the islands. But for those who live in Kinmen, living in symbiosis with the huge body of water of the ocean every day, people are in fact confronted with the intricate coexistence of visible and invisible borders. War is a memory, a story, and at the same time a deserted bunker. War is also the invisible middle line of the Taiwan Strait, and the tension swarming up when approaching the invisible virtual line of two sovereign territories. These invisible national borders exist in our consciousness, rendering the frontline a kind of

biopolitics that is both near and far. It is not in plain sight.

Cai Guo-Jie's 2024 work *Fairway* brings to the surface the invisible boundaries and the politics of life intertwined with them. Through the artist's aesthetic actions, *Fairway* slides into a sea filled with political and capital borders, navigating between them with human and non-human bodies.

Re-evoked in *Fairway* are the ghosts of the Cold War hidden under the invisible scenes, against a backdrop of countries, near and far, in the daily life of Kinmen and Xiamen. The images, through aesthetic actions, intervene in the technology of demarcating borders and the political apparatus associated with borders.

Cai Guo-Jie's artistic practice has long focused on boundary measurement and measurement technology, and in the 2024 new work, entangled land politics and politics of life flows with the artist's own journey towards the ocean and its waves, wading him into attempts at crossing the water and exploring new modes of life occupation. Challenging our presupposition that the frontier should be a scene of inanimate existence in the new Cold War, *Fairway* allows us to see the oyster fields floating on the ocean of the middle line of Kinmen and Xiamen. With which Cai's re-enactment of frontier transcends frontiers, letting the gap between confinement and the space beyond the confinement emerge from the horizon. The styrofoam used to anchor the oyster farm produces non-human forms of life crossing the frontline of sovereign politics. How can our desire to control our borders, and the state's militarization of them, resist the capitalization of the oceans? Or is there an inherent conspiratory relationship between the state and capital?

Cai Guo-Jie's artistic actions have always asked these difficult questions. They stretch into the realm of how politics of life is made possible and impossible. In the *Half-Field Plan*, which began in 2004, and *Homeland (2019-2020)*, the artist reverses conventional notions of land ownership by purchasing “cadastral lines” rather than the “land” itself, challenging the seemingly self-evident ethics of private land ownership under capitalism. By recruiting refugees in Europe and allowing them to redraw the memory of their homeland from the experience of their own displacement, *Homeland* once again presents the complex experiences surrounding the idea of “home”. All cadastral sales involve measurement, which reduces people's experience and land use in the real world into flattened, abstract capital value. However, the abstract value of ownership can never fully align with the complex historical space shaped by real human lives, nor can the

intricate life experiences between people and place be reduced, commodified, and exchanged at will. For displaced refugees, how can the homeland of the past, imbued with real meaning in memory, be controlled, abstracted, and then changed hands with the technology of the state and capital such as the cadastral map? Through *Half-Field Plan* and *Homeland*, Cai Guo-Jie continues to make the unevenness between politics of life, capitalization, and national borders intertwined in these ownership boundaries manifest before our eyes.

This manifestation shows that the ethics of capitalized land is not in plain sight. By atomizing seemingly self-evident phenomena, asking the cadastral with cadastral lines, and asking what "land" means by addressing the dust of the gaps between the cadastral lines, Cai Guo-Jie's works echoes feminist physicist Karen Barad's new materialist theories concerned about what she calls "intra-active" phenomenon. Being one of the leading feminist thinkers of our time, Karen Barad subverts established social ideas of physics established since Descartes that consider physical and material phenomena through inquiring "the thing in itself". Karen Barad's insistence in utilizing "intra" in the idea of "intra-action" stresses on the fact that materiality we know as atoms, neutrons, and electrons should be understood their entanglement with existing social and political concepts wherein these substances anchor upon; the relationship materiality has with space-time as well as social-historical context are internal to the very existence of the materials. Barad references Bohr's physical theories in the 1910s and the subsequent quantum mechanics with which the basic models of photons, electrons, and atoms depend on the dynamic relationship between matter and space. For example, electrons could only move in orbits with certain energy values. In other words, it is the relationship of matter to matter constitutes matter, and these associations determine the existence of matter and energy. These dynamic relations are necessary conditions for the existence of matter, not just a state of external interaction. Barad's new materialist theory helps us see that material existence relies on intra-active relations, which are dynamically intertwined.

Cai Guo-Jie's artistic actions echo this new materialistic perspective to a considerable extent, with projects exposing the politics of life among intra-active islands, islands whose boundaries are manifested only in a dynamic if not visible at all times. Even as the national boundaries on the sea between Kinmen and Xiamen are hidden, through artistic intervention, the dynamics of these political and military forces can be revealed. If a Taiwanese person or a ship glides across this invisible border, it summons sovereignty in arms, often alongside the state, capital, the military, and possibly even leading up to a scenario of war.

The two artworks *Fairway* and *Vertical Land* in the exhibition "Between Waves and Soils" allow us to see the uncompromising endeavour in Cai Guo-Jie's art. And through his artistic intervention, politics of island lives and resiliency become available to us: oyster farms on the sovereign border line, the entangled locators and styrofoam buoys, the agave and the hostile scenery created by the megaphone are all revealed as aesthetics of artistic molecules, emerging onto our horizon.

Plants, sea creatures, intra-active islands

In *Vertical Land*, we see the artist enlisting villagers to plant Agave sisalana in front of a collapsing bunker on a precarious red clay slope. The art enactment of political frictions through plants, soil, and sands is also of great concern for contemporary ecological art and ecofeminism. As Cai Guo-Jie said, Agave sisalana, an alien species, was introduced to Taiwan in the early 20th century. As a strong and solid plant, agave is often used as a part of militarized infrastructure and is a common plant in war landscapes. The cultivation of Agave sisalana thus becomes prophetic action of upcoming war. Since 2013, Xiamen has embarked on the construction of Xiamen Xiang'an International Airport, located between the Dadeng and Xiaodeng island, and the reclamation project of the airport requires a large amount of sand and gravel. The construction extracts sands and sinks the northeast coast of Kinmen. This situation is particularly worse on the northeastern coast of Kinmen.

Vertical Land takes Agave sisalana its core to repair the coast of Kinmen Island. In the face of the collapsing bunker, the artist collaborates with villagers to plant agave, a species stronger than human. Through the power of these non-human entities, the project addresses a precarious historical situation, triggering a profound artistic action. The use of plants as artistic materials not only challenges visual art's urge to control its medium, it also invokes the relationship between plants and the environment through the lives entangled while the medium itself has the potential to escape the control of the artist. The uncontrolled vitality of plants has also led contemporary art to create aesthetic attempts beyond anthropocentricity. The slowly evolving but resilient life of plants, and the soil and water attached to them, challenge the basic presuppositions of contemporary art that are highly controlled by the aesthetic environment.

Art scholar Yota Batsaki recently wrote about Precious Okoyomon's use of Kudzu in her work at the Venice Biennale in 2022, wherein Okoyomon creates a heavy, dark, damp, and ever-changing ecological artwork (Batsaki 2024) ¹. Batsaki takes this artwork to address contemporary art's attempt in connecting complex historical issues such as migration, colonization, war, and racial space through plants as a medium. Bringing living plants into the white cube, allowing plants to occupy the artwork and art space, this kind of new works challenge contemporary art that emphasizes a high degree of aesthetic control, which the biopolitics of plants themselves form relationships with the environment and create an internal aesthetic tension. The enactment of plants also proclaims a farewell from the Romanticism legacy still pungent in landscape paintings, a genre birthed in the Renaissance, and the accompanied aesthetic convention of possessing and controlling nature through an aesthetic frame. In turn, the artistic action using plants as a medium allows non-human species intertwined with human beings in the environment and history to show the intra-active dynamic of the world, by introducing the planet, the environment and ecological changes through species different from humans in terms of life time and scale.

Between waves and soils, Cai Guo-Jie takes us into the intra-active islands, wherein a new aesthetic of borders, plants, and war are manifested. Exploring the aesthetic control and ecological tension through the agave life that has been intertwined with war, these works allow non-human species to lead us to the middle line of the inaccessible Taiwan Strait, where possibly a new waterway out of human centralism can emerge.

¹ Precious Okoyomon's work is called *To See the Earth before the End of the World*, shown in the 59th La Biennale di Venezia "The Milk of Dreams." Regarding Yota Batsaki's article, see: Yota Batsaki, 'The Plant at the End of the World: Precious Okoyomon's Invasive Art,' *Critical Inquiry*, vol.50 No.4: 585-609 (2024)

