

## ***An interference: red and blue***

Jessica Laraine Williams

Recalling physicist Richard Feynman's double-slit experiment, quantum particles take all possible paths in the universe to travel from one locus to another. Transmitted through an intermediary screen, they collect in representational bands at their terminus, made tangible through the sensorium of our world. The principles of superposition enliven these multitudinous passages, before their petrification makes way to existence. Our very act of observation excises all possible potentiate histories, and the most improbable paths tend to neutralise one another in an incomprehensibly limitless contestation of actual determinacies. Such is the act of quantum interference. After Hawking and Mlodinow (2010): "Quantum physics tell us... through our observation of the present, the (unobserved) past, like the future, is indefinite and exists only as a spectrum of possibilities."<sup>1</sup> Looking, noting, participating, measuring; all are gestures in our repertoire of quantum agency. At any given moment, an infinite flowering of being collapses in on itself synchronously, antithetical occurrence and disappearance as a universal law of matter.

With two audiovisual tracks spliced together, the triptych video screens of Youjia Lu's *Super(im)position* (2018)<sup>2</sup> cycle in and out, phasic openings onto a zone of corrupted subjecthood. Each interfacing wall features the artist, an unclothed female figure seized in temporal abeyance. The inverted negative processing suggests a plane of narcosis, saturated in strobing binaries of red and blue. Subtle gestures mark each screen in a staccato fashion, resisting a discernable narrative, only small eruptions of bodily amplitude. The figure is cut through at each frame, unresolved. Lu performs relentlessly as these vitreous selves. Atomised possibilities for an identity, a chronology, lie outside each frame. They remain in fact with the artist, unable to be transduced into these phantasms. Through her video technique, Lu has nullified familiar symbolic referents, dissembling idioms found in cinema and film. What remains are pluralities at work, an unhinged timeline made visible- but not lexical. Once could have been words, now an utterance in disarray. From around the installation runs a polyphonic shudder, like the deadened battering of moth wings at a windowpane.

The experiential affect might have touched visitors softly, if Lu had not layered her elements with such conscious antagonism. Her videos arrest the unexpected and unprepared into a dissensus that-paradoxically- unites them. For each new spectator, a diverse suite of visceral reactions pool

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<sup>1</sup> Hawking, Stephen, and Leonard Mlodinow. *The Grand Design*. New York: Bantam Books, 2010, pg 106.

<sup>2</sup> Youjia Lu, *Super(im)position* (2018), video installation, Kings Artist-Run, 12 May 2018–2 Jun 2018.

into discomfort, on the doorstep of horror. Indeterminacy represented: this is a supernatural vision of disorienting, unknowable liminality.

A man with Tourette's sensibility enters the space. More attuned to variance in light and sound than most, his refractory tolerance for strobe has been exhausted, spent on a rare cinema excursion that was deemed worthy of the physical consequences. He baulks, apprehended by corporeal premonition. At times, his body expresses aesthetic judgement in a dance of muscular contortions. The dance comes unbidden, though he might temporarily suppress it. As he moves past the large-scale screens, a red and blue glow bathes his face. There are no physical tells. Somehow, this work makes a latent refuge out of its oscillating stimuli. His predeterminations fall away, and he is unburdened, if momentarily.

A harried medical doctor arrives, straight from the bustling intensity of neurosurgical rounds. She steps into the space without hesitation. In her brusqueness, one is reminded of the necessary detachment that comes with diagnostic imaging. These tableaux show processions of catastrophic pathology, or coy deviations that creep from a baseline norm. In them, she must decipher omens. Sometimes her patients see things, hear things, that fracture reality. They reach past our world of commons into a superimposed other, a perceptual singularity received only by them. The doctor moves quickly to an adjoining space. The work of the day crowds in on her, unbearably. *Super(im)position* confronts her, and the others, with all those aborted happenings compressed into the artist's own, quantum lore.

*This text was written by Jessica Laraine Williams (jlogos.net) in conjunction with Super(im)position (2018), commissioned by the artist.*