

Wang Jianwei **About “Alienation”**

In The Arcades Project, Benjamin Walter cited Karl Marx’s concepts of nature and knowledge:

NI6.4 “... then Marx conceives nature from the beginning in social categories. Physical nature does not enter directly into world history; rather, it enters indirectly, as a process of material production that goes on, from the earliest moment, not only between man and nature but also between man and man.

...

that pure nature presupposed by all human activity is replaced by nature as material production – that is, by a social ‘matter’ mediated and transformed through human social activity, and thus at the same time capable of further change and modification in the present and the future.”

Model

Though nine decades have passed since Vladimir Tatlin was commissioned by the Communist International and designed “Monument to the Third International” (1909.10 – 2009.9), this project about humanity’s idealistic future remains an architectural model. However, it contains deep political and pragmatic metaphors and the imagination of new production capabilities, acting as an artificial constitution with every detail of specification, function, and dimension penetrated by political aspiration and defiance; with a height of 303 meters it would have dwarfed the great symbol of capitalism, the Eiffel Tower.

The model embodied a desire to construct an organic combination of communist political ideals and industrialized production – a new means of production featuring political ideology– that would surpass that of capitalism.

Production

The socialist construction of China in the 1950’s was under the principles of “be economically viable first, take aesthetics into consideration if possible (Zhou Enlai)”, which to some extent continued the political idealism of “Monument to the Third International”. These principles were integrated into a shared new order of cultural revolution and art production, with reality being encapsulated in the rigid amalgamation of means of production and practical function. These principles had their own characteristics, they met the demand for a simple, standardized mode of production; lowered production cost, guarantying a highly homogeneous execution of products and maximized equality among users, while balancing the differences and dissolving the possibility for technological irregularities; while standardized processes relevant to the product, reduced expenses in sectors of production, transportation, storage, and utility.

Practice

“Distance” uses vintage reclaimed furniture as its material. All furnishings were specifically dated and manufactured during the 1950s to 1980s. The designs of this period are vastly distinguished from both Chinese traditional craftsmanship and modern manufacturing; they have become specific historical carriers of social relations and a means of production, marking how our daily life can be transferred into materialized ideologies.

The construction of these ideologies was distributed to function and utility, ensuring the consistence between both means, and relations of production. While the function determined the scope of ideology, the body was homogenized in the process of utility.

Method

“Distance” can be understood as another way of constructing: the original instructions, including material property and function, were either partially removed or maintained. They were re-organized using different methods of description to build new bonds with other substances. In doing so, they share with each other their contradictions and turn into a new “organism” of material and function. This means of production explains one of the ways I perceive the world and the natural environment: as an attitude of how to grasp the essence within the related, shared, and duplicated complexity.

Site

The so-called material integration should be kept in a scattered and chaotic state. To maintain on-site uncertainty means the integration of an “event” is established within a diverse set of knowledge systems, rather than flawlessly enclosed into a single type of experiential manifestation. It can be regarded as a topological description of nature: different knowledge could destroy an integral “event” by descriptively cutting it into fragments. Once the uniqueness of certain order is questioned, undetermined factors give way to ambiguity.