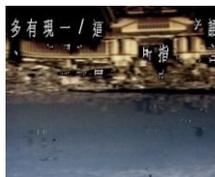
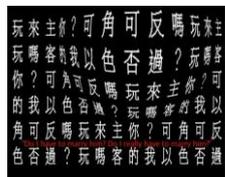


Door Game



Linda LAI

a found footage exercise

(26 minutes / 2005)

1. DOOR DRAMA: PLEASE ENTER...

2. (SHORT-)CIRCUITING MELODRAMA

3. TRAP DOORS

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***Door Game* (Linda Lai / 2005, 26 minutes)**

Concept / Artist's Statement:

Banging doors can be highly symbolic narrative objects – or are they simply a mechanical measure, or just a slip of tongue?

Door Game is a narrative game playing with the found footage of a number of family ethics melodramas from HK Cantonese cinema of the 1950s and 1960s. Salen and Zimmerman say, “To play a game is to rely on and interact with the representations the game generates... Games can represent. Games are representations.” In this work, by re-assembling loose fragments into some kind of coherent structures, I reveal the hidden logic of the genre, exposing the repetitive elements. Through story-creation, my critique of the gender-biased, formulaic quality inherent to Cantonese melodramas evolves.

Door Game is the performance of a melodramatic tradition being dismantled step by step. *Door Game* comprises of three episodes: “Door Drama: please enter,” “(Short-)Circuiting Melodrama” and “Trap Doors.” From one to the next, the narrative function of sight and sound in *Door Game* diminishes. Images and sounds become more and more pure signs and tokens of shared story-telling practices, whereas the expressive and narrative function of the written text grows. Towards the end, text and noise take over images, and critique overrides narration.

創作概念

嘖嘖的開門關門聲響個不絕，煞有介事的像喻意著甚麼。或許純屬畫蛇添足，又或純技術性的裝置。

誠意邀請觀眾跟我目睹一個本有點似是而非的愛情家庭倫理故事逐步化解、肢離破碎、變形，最後淪為斷裂的夢囈。《戲門》三部曲，從“穿/串門·入戲”到“戲框 - 情愛短路”到“機關重重”，影像的敘事功能漸漸淡化而失效，剩下零丁的符碼、擺著姿態而無特殊所指，或變成文字書寫的附從品，最後淪為可隨意挪移的“死物”，給割開、擠破、塗改、刪除。相反的，文字的書寫越發兇猛，一口一口的吃掉影像，無休的吞吐、嘶叫著。人物影像的隨機浮動逐漸取代述理言情的表述。

《戲門》從香港五六十年代粵語片找來“現成物” (found objects)，進行解構和戲弄，挪用的均為播音皇帝李我天空小說所改編的，導演各別，卻同吹文藝片的通式濫調；情節鋪陳峰迴路轉的偽造性，把某種道德立場推為人性所出的情理，構成真理一般的性別規範，可真叫絕！理論家都說遊戲有表徵作用，遊戲本身就是表徵，而我，就以表徵對策表徵，玩個不停。

Production Details

Sound: stereo / Color + B/W / Original output format: DV PAL / with English & Chinese subtitles

Script/Research/Visual narrative & sound design:

Linda LAI

Editing/Effects:

Maggie CHAN

Main stories are constructed from footage of the following films:

Blossoms in Rainy May I (1960, dir. QIN Jian, Hong Kong)

Blossoms in Rainy May II (1960, dir. QIN Jian, Hong Kong)

Second Spring (1960, dir. WANG Tianlin, Hong Kong)

Additional head shots from:

How Two Naughty Girls Thrice Insulted Siu Yuet-pak (1952, dir. WU Hui, Hong Kong)

Oriole's Song (1956, dir. LI Chenfeng, Hong Kong)

Additional video footage: Linda Lai

All movies consulted are film adaptations of air-wave dramas (on radio) by LI Wo.

Acknowledgement:

WONG Aining

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Hong Kong Film Archive

Hong Kong Art Centre

Hong Kong Arts Development Council

The School of Creative Media, the City University of Hong Kong

A Linda Lai work / 2005

Door Game's Exhibition History

2005

****Door Game* has been screened as part of the PLAY> project (curated by IP Yuk-yiu) together with 13 other works in the following in **Hong Kong**:

September 19, 2005 / 8-9:30pm **Bittersweet** (cafe)

Co-presenters: IP Yuk-yiu, Hong Kong Arts Centre in association with Bittersweet

September 24 & 30, 2005 / 7:30pm **Agnès B. Cinema, Hong Kong Arts Centre**
(screening + seminar + artist talk)

Co-presenters: IP Yuk-yiu, Hong Kong Arts Centre

November 4 & 11, 2005 / 8pm **Habitus** (art space)

Co-presented by IP Yuk-yiu and HK Arts Centre, in association with Habitus and the Emergency Lab

2006

Official Selection for the “Experimental Film” section of the WOMEN MAKE WAVES 2006 festival (Taipei) 2006 [第 13 屆女性影展（臺北）實驗片類] / Screened in the program: “Interdisciplinary Experimental Shorts VII: 2006 WMW Jury Selections” as part of the “Vitality of Hybrid Cinema” Section.

Curated as part of the “Hong Kong Playground,” exhibition at Kao Yuan University of Technology’s Art Centre, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, December

2007

Curated for the “Notthatbalai” Experimental Arts Festival, Jul 21-Aug 5, 2007, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

[dialogue list] Linda Lai's found footage exercises

Door Game

All games create meanings through play.

*"To play a game is to rely on and interact with
the representations the game generates..."*

Games can represent.

Games are representations."

--Salen & Zimmerman's *Rules of Play*, p. 364

1.

Door Drama: please enter...

Δ The door is locked from inside.

Δ Step back. Let me try...

Perhaps she's really...

[door opens]

Δ Young master...

[door opens]

Δ Lung!

Δ Go find a few more hands to help. I'll get the police.

Some time in the 1950s...

Δ Meet Miss Wai-ling Ko, your new colleague.

Ten years have gone by...

Δ Wai-ling...

Δ Siu-man...

Δ Are you alright?

Δ I'm good -- now that you're back.

Δ Don't leave me any more, Siu-man!

Δ I'll never leave you again.

[inter-titles]

Δ So wonderful that Mr. Cheung is back!

Now the family is together again...

[inter-titles]

Δ The whole family together?

[text on screen] Bauhinia 紫荊 TOI

Back in the 1910s...

Δ His letter is so beautifully written.

A regular office day...

Δ Morning! 早晨!

Δ Bauhinia! Bauhinia

Δ Bauhinia! Bauhinia

Day after day...

Δ Mr. Cheung!

Δ Morning!

Δ Morning!

Δ Mr. Cheung!

Δ Bauhinia!

[text on screen]

Δ About time to go
Δ Let's go...
Δ What about Bauhinia?
Δ She said she's not joining us.
Enjoy your evening...

Δ Chui-sum!

[A crowd rush away.]

Δ Ai-ya!
Δ Ai-ya!

Δ Go and see what happened!

[door sequence with women]

Δ Mum!

Δ Bauhinia!

Δ **Hurry! Go and see what happened!**

Δ Bauhinia!
Is it my sister calling?

Back in the 1910s...a wedding ceremony...

The bride is brought in on the Matchmaker's back.

[inter-titles]

Δ Where has everyone gone?

[a close-up shot of the bride lifting her veil with a sad look]

The bride has been married to a man who just died...

[black screen]

A month later...

Δ Mr. Cheung!

Δ Morning!

Δ Morning!

Δ Mr. Cheung!

[text on screen]

Δ What happened in the past...

[inter-titles]

A dark secret from the past...

[inter-titles]

Δ Please forgive me if I had offended you with my words.

Just like any other day...

Δ Chui-sum!

Δ Please don't go!

Δ Chui-sum!

Chui-sum!

Δ Chui-sum!

Chui-sum!

Δ Chui-sum!

Open up. We need to talk.

Δ Step back!

Δ Chui-sum, Chui-sum, open up!

Δ Chui-sum, why are you crying?

Chui-sum, open up.

I need to spit it out.

Δ You're such a heartless person.

My master!

[text on screen] I have sworn to heavens not to see you again!

Two months later...

Δ Morning!

Δ Morning!

Δ Morning!

Δ Morning!

Δ Morning!

Δ Morning!

Δ Mr. Cheung, morning!

Δ Thank you, Springflower!

Δ Take care, my lady!

Δ Morning!

Δ Mr. Cheung!

Δ Where's my wife?

Δ In her bedroom...

Δ What's the matter, Mum?

Δ Haven't you found her?

Δ Is that so?

Δ Shouldn't we hurry to find out where she is?

Δ I'll look and find her no matter what!

Δ Kit! Kit!...

Δ Need to run now. I must find her no matter what.

Δ I don't want to come home!

I need to go and look for Chui-sum.

I must find Chui-sum!!!

Δ Do you know where Bauhinia is?

Δ I have no idea.

[text on screen]

Δ My lady.

Δ Is Bauhinia asleep already?

Δ Not yet.

She's in her bedroom with a male classmate.

[text on screen]

Δ Just a second! Who's at the door?

Δ What a daring thing you've done to help her to elope!

Δ My dear daughter-in-law!

Δ Morning!

In the mean time...

Δ Chui-sum!...

Δ You...

你.....

Δ Siu-man, Bauhinia is still not home!

Δ What?...

Waste no more time! Let's leave now!

Δ That's them!

Δ Grab them!

Chui-sum, don't worry! I'll be fine. I'll be fine!

Δ Thanks, Mrs. Lee!
Δ How's school today, Bauhinia?

Δ May I see Bauhinia?
Δ My young lady.
Δ Hi, Madam!
Δ Who should I announce, please?

Δ Bauhinia!

Δ Hurry! Hurry!...

Δ Ghost! Ghost! Ghost!
Δ Ghost! Ghost! I saw the ghost of Chui-sum!

Δ Mum! 媽!
Δ Mum! 媽!

Δ Kit! Kit!
Δ You're all devils trapping me!!

Δ Why are they all gone?

Δ Miss, please don't go.

[END OF PART 1]

2.

(Short-)Circuiting Melodrama

One hazy morning in January

She sat by the window, looking onto the street

He knocked on her door and heard, vaguely, "Come in."

"I feel my body and my interiors degenerating. Perhaps getting married would make me feel better," she said.

Perhaps...

They decided to get married...

The wedding smells the presence of ghosts

After that...

“How long will you be away?” she asked gently.

“Probably a few months,” he replied, equally gently.

“Oh, a few months really?” She repeats softly.

They said they would wait for each other no matter what.

So he was gone, and for many months. During that time, war broke out and changed everything. Nothing was the same.

In the mean time,

He was also waiting. He waited and waited, and 10 years went by while he’s still waiting.

(She says to him) “Are you crazy? What’s wrong with you?”

“I’m not mad!!” (he replied.)

Perhaps...

“I didn’t sleep with him,” she said

“What are you screaming at? Haven’t I given you everything I have?” She continued.

Perhaps...

She decided to go out for a walk.

Cold ran down her spine, numbing her senses altogether.

Bewildered and numbed, she felt everything that happened was like a curse, demanding her penitence.

Whenever these thoughts came to her,
She felt even ending her life is not enough.

On her way home, she strolled and strolled without noticing...

Not far in the outer skirt of the city was a short, white mansion.

Door closed:

They decided to run away...

Door opened:

He returned with no good news!

Door closed:

They turned against one another.

Door opened,

"They're threatening us with the police again!!!"

Door closed:

He decided to stay away from this place for a while.

Door opened:

There's still no sign of him.

Behind those doors,

Drowned in her deep sorrows, she refused to eat or drink,

"You – have abandoned me. You, too, have abandoned me!"

Door opened:

Good news coming...

Door opened:

This time, bad news.

Door closed:

The two virgin girls are losing their mind.

Door opened:

“Let’s plot!”

Door closed:

“Watch out!”

An urgent message of warning...

But...Doors locked!!!

Door opened:

...

Door closed:

“I can’t make up my mind!”

Door closed:

S/he regrets – and hesitates...

Door opened:

She’s still pondering...

In the mean time,

She thanked her, got off the cab, and climbed up the dark and narrow staircase.

Without a thought she pushed the door open.

Little had she been able to see what’s going to become of her thirty years down the road...

Perhaps there’s nothing to regret about in this

On the contrary, according to some friends of hers

I don't think this should be an issue for her.

If I remember correctly

A few years later, I showed up at her wedding and had a big fight with her.

From the very beginning...

A pity that she found herself too old from the very beginning

Therefore, her madness is due to...

Otherwise she would have...

And yet some said...

Perhaps because she's a writer...

She stared intensely at the live volcano not so far from where she stood.

Everything looks normal, just that the clouds seem to have quietly paraded in front of the sun – for a solemn final salute!

She sat by the window, looking onto the street

One hazy morning in January

[END OF PART 2]

3.

Trap Doors

A face

Another face

A relation forms...

A face, a female face

A face, a male face

A relation forms...

He has many faces...

I desire you

I desire you

I desire you

I desire you

{***Note in the following text and sound are not supportive elements: they have multiple purposes, sometimes communicative, sometimes as sub-titles, and sometimes purely graphic and visual...}

[VO/SFX] (in Chinese) You two naughty girls have given me such a big headache etc. (sound effect mainly, NOT for comprehension)

[Chinese txt – will appear later in English]

It contains multiple points of identification as each character is defined by his/her choice of action and consequences...etc. etc.

I desire you

I desire you

How is meaning created?

How dare you!

I owe you...

How is meaning created? (x 3)

Melodrama is an assemblage of an apparently diverse bulk of characters...etc. etc.

[graphics] Speech is action. Speech Act...

I owe you...

How dare you!

How dare you!

How dare you!

How dare you!

Can roles be switched?

Can I take another perspective?

Can roles be switched?

Can I take another perspective?

[Chinese text as graphics] Look!

[text as graphics / not for comprehension] How is love created?

[VO-female voice] Narrativity in melodrama – discourse turned into reasoned morality... etc. etc.

[VO-male voice lecturing...not for word-for-word comprehension]

[VO-female voice] He is an authoritative, patriarchal snob with absolute class bias; the enlightened returning scholar from the West; an understanding mediator; an indulgent dancing-hall visitor...(voice cut off)

[VO-woman's voice murmurs...will be repeated in text form later] On the surface, the central character is the woman-victim whose suffering unfolds like a long-lasting ritual. The narrative process strives for her rescue. Take a closer look... The real subject is actually her male lover... etc. etc.

[Fragments of the following text appear on screen]:

I casually pressed the red button on a restless day...roller-coaster ride with alternating swings –...pulsating pleasures of evil conspiracy...The visceral experience alerts me to the extreme artificiality of the narrative etc. etc. [will be repeated in full later in text]

Do I have to marry him? Do I really have to marry him? (x 3)

On the surface, the central character is the woman-victim whose suffering unfolds like a long-lasting ritual. The narrative process strives for her rescue.

Take a closer look... The real subject is actually her male lover –

He may lie sick in bed, he may lose his senses, scream and talk to himself at his loss of love, he may...

His madness rules over the entire course of events. If anything in the film ever changes for the better, it is just so the male protagonist's life and sanity will be preserved. The story to "rescue the woman" is actually that to "preserve the man"!

[VO] ... Discourse turned into reasoned morality...

It contains multiple points of identification as each character is defined by his/her choice of action and consequences, addressing individual viewers as ethically incomplete subjects in need of admonition, self-modification and maintenance.

I casually pressed the red button on a restless day...

A toboggan fall took me through a series of trap doors...

Sending me then on to a roller-coaster ride with alternating swings –

between moral exaltation and the pulsating pleasures of evil conspiracy...

The visceral experience alerts me to the extreme artificiality of the narrative –

A kind of pleasurable constructed-ness that displays itself,

Like a banal version of Brechtian distantiation.

Escape... Caught... Run... Captured... Locked up... Escape... Dive... Saved... Caught...

Narrativity in melodrama –

Discourse turned into reasoned morality...

A particular form of morality turned into necessity via plotting...

We have created drama.

We have also reenacted the drama we create.

[END OF PART 3]

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Short Bio

Assistant Professor at The City University of Hong Kong's School of Creative Media, Linda is an inter-disciplinary artist, educator, scholar, writer and curator. She did her Ph.D. in Cinema Studies at the New York University. Her scholarly and creative research includes cultural studies, film theory/history, narrative experimentation, and cybertextuality. Her digital work first appeared at the Hong Kong Art Biennial 2003; and her experimental documentary "I Told Them My Camera Was On" (2004) world-premiered at the 51st International Short Film Festival Oberhausen (2005), Germany. She has curated research-based art exhibitions such as "The Writing Machine Collective" (2004) and "Take a ST/Roll" (2005). Her photo-text dialogues with Theresa Mikuriya resulted in *Crypto-glyph: Dialogues in Many Tongues in the Hidden Crevices of an Open City* (2004), which documents their 8-round play with the two media. She has been the juror for three editions of Hong Kong's Independent Film & Video Awards (IFVA) since 1999 and for other media art events.

(2007)

END