

ArtReview Asia



Liu Shiyuan *Lost in Export*
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Liu Shiyuan's short film *Lost in Export* (2015), a work completed over the last two years and screened here alongside a single sculpture, tells the story of two young couples' encounters, their frustrations with their jobs and their relationships, and ultimately their infidelities. Yet this seemingly linear cinematic narrative is in fact a *trompe-l'oeil*. During the course of its nearly 34 minutes, the artwork offers a series of reenactments of famous cinematic scenes extracted from various gems of the art-film romance genre. You probably need to be a true aficionado to identify every allusion in this collage of clichéd love scenarios, but perhaps the title of the artwork, purposefully adopted from Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* (2003), gives a clue to its underlying and perhaps even contentious intent. For *Lost in Export* seems not intended as a tribute to epic moments from the history of cinema; rather, it inquires into the affects of cinema and, by the very fact of its appropriation of cinematic readymades, probes at what constitutes the power of filmmaking itself.

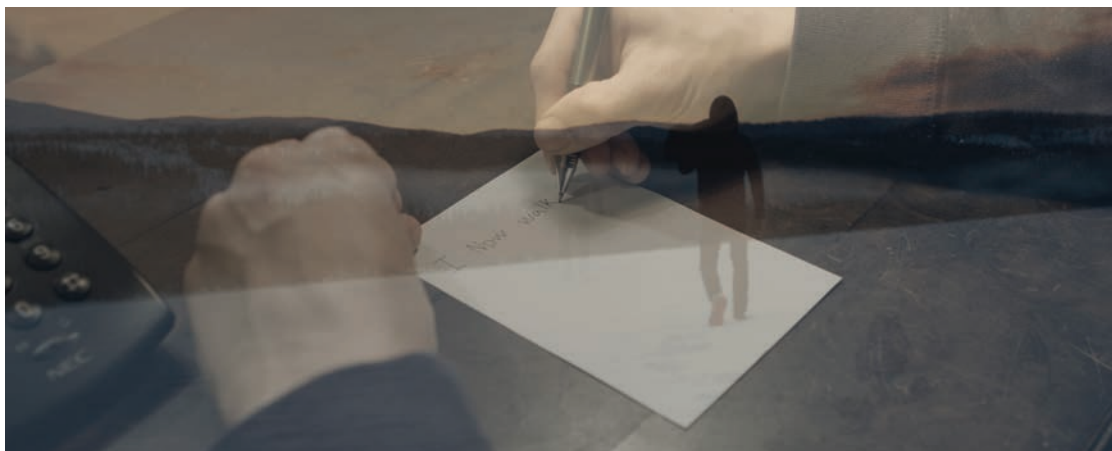
Apparently inspired by Mark Cousins's *The Story of Film: An Odyssey* (2011), and perhaps

more precisely A.O. Scott's description of that work in *The New York Times* as 'the place from which all future revisionism must start', Liu filters her doubts about the aforementioned affects of cinema through various devices. These include: the film's narrative (for instance, one of the characters, John, introduces his relationship to another character, Sophie, saying, "But the thing is, when you fall in love with the landscape, a picture, or a culture, it means a change for you and the people around you"); its staging (a seemingly inadvertent closeup of the cover of a book titled *Photography Changes Everything*, as John and Sophie are having a conversation about her discontent with her job); or those parodies of well-known scenes from *The Beach* (2000), *In the Mood for Love* (2000) and *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), to name just a few. Furthermore, Liu has even intermittently mixed a wide array of technical variations – elements of montage, visual superimposition, low-resolution or incandescent images, and even shifts in the dimension of the images – into her narrative, serving to highlight its construction. Most of all, if one approaches

the film with a set of finely tuned ears, one would notice that unlike the corny mood-inducing music in sappy love stories that is generically paired with visual narrative in order to kidnap our emotions, the soundtrack throughout this work is incongruent with its visual other. Indeed, its electronically generated plasticity further emphasises the artificiality of cinematographic affects and its engendering of human emotions.

The result of *Lost in Export* is not only a banter with 'romantic cinema' as a form of manipulated visual consumption that generates certain conditioned emotional responses through its deployment of well-worn clichés. At the same time Liu Shiyuan successfully inquires into all aspects that challenge the establishment of the power of discourse in film. Perhaps like the artist's *Chair-No.2* (2015), a bouncing chair with two legs installed on balloons at the entrance of the gallery in which the short film is shown, Liu rescues viewers from being abducted by cinematic godfathers, and allows them a moment of deliberate madness.

Eva Renaud



Lost in Export, 2015,
single-channel video, colour, sound, 33 min 43 sec.
Courtesy White Space Beijing