

比利时当代艺术展

BELGIAN CONTEMPORARY ART

凸凹 CONCAVE

CONVEX 凸凹

本次展览“凹面凸面：比利时当代艺术”源于WIELS和上海油罐艺术中心对两国文化艺术的尊重和热情。在当前的当代艺术语境中，比利时以其众多杰出的艺术家和他们的创作而享誉国际。本次展览立足于对当代艺术整体二元性的思考。

凸凹二元论代表了内在与外在、活动与被动、自我接纳与他人调和的二元关系。有些作品高度内敛，内心的想法完全来自于艺术家自信的表达。通过作品，艺术家呈现出自信与自我接纳，并与外部世界互动。有的作品则传达出超越身体体验的感受，高度形而上。然而，这两种类型的艺术作品都能让观众与之产生身体上的联系，因为它们最终体现的是内在与外在的有机循环。

The exhibition “Convex/Concave: Belgian Contemporary Art” originates from WIELS and TANK Shanghai’s mutual respect and passion for the cultures and arts of the two countries.

In the current context of contemporary art, Belgium is internationally acclaimed for its many eminent artists and their creations. This exhibition rests on reflections of the dualism of contemporary art as a whole.

The convex/concave dualism represents the binary relationship between the inner and the outer, activity and passivity, self-acceptance and the reconciliation with the others. Some works are highly introvert, with the inner thoughts coming entirely from the confident expressions of the artists. Through the artworks, the artists present their self-confidence and self-acceptance and interact with the outer world; others convey feelings that are beyond bodily experiences and highly metaphysical. However, both types of artworks allow the audience to relate physically to them since ultimately they embody the organic inner-outer cycle.

在感知，视角和反思的层面，凸面或凹面的方向象征了主观性的多重交换和相互联系。这些反思是主观二元论的替身，象征着内在自我与外在世界的对立趋势：一种朝内的看相沉思的凝视，以及一种朝外的、外向的、引人入胜的凝视。这种二元论定义了主体性或身份以及自我的概念，它是一个镜片，透过这个镜片，我们得以将当代比利时艺术家聚集在一起。此种二元论体现了比利时艺术家的现代性和艺术努力的总体特征，以及他们的独特性。此外，此番组织原则的选择，与中国艺术家和知识分子处理呈现模式和主导范式的方式照相呼应，从而将凸凹的辩证转变为对自我意识的亦趣味亦沉思的态度。

这15名比利时艺术家中的一些人最近才崭露头角，另一些已在国际上享有盛誉，他们组成的代表团不仅肯定了比利时艺术和思想的想象力和创造力，而且还回顾了东西方知识交流的关键时刻。在17世纪，一群了解并关注占星学和时空测量的学者从欧洲来到中国。包括来自低地国家的使者在内的这些派遣人员，用他们的观测、制图和计算的技术挑战中国学者所使用的技术，从而间接地向中国引进了有关太阳系日心说的最新科学论文。日心说的理论在当时与教会权威背书的地心说背道而驰。Ferdinand Verbiest（费迪南德·韦比斯特，中文名为南怀仁）通过调整地球和空间的凹凸投影数学模具，制作了验证日心说所

需的新的观测仪器，并将其应用于天文馆中，而这个天文台至今仍然冠有他的中文名字¹。当时的西方教会的庞大权力和主导的宗教模式意味着它无法接受日心说的科学事实，因为这将迅速的将地心说置于历史好奇心的境地。而当时的中国的相关理论很快就接受了这种新的范式，并将日心说所引导出的相关发现，融合进一个地球作为相互关联的宇宙现实的一个元素的观点中去，即一个具有不同时间概念的广阔宇宙。

随着视角的转变，在凸镜中反射出自己的、以自我为中心的世界，被一个凹面形象且相互作用方式为向心的亦或相互联系的一个世界所代替。值得注意的是，望远镜的凹凸镜和棱镜使人们可以精确、详细地观察自然现象和宇宙现象，从而提供了抽象模式之外的，另外一种仅依赖经验、物理和可感知的现实来呈现趋势的模式。将比利时低地国家的艺术与周边艺术世界的艺术区分开来的特征之一，是其细致、精确和细节的观察，这无关哲学家或理论家的宏大模式更多的是比利时艺术家用通过对日常生活的充满细节的描绘，其呈现几乎触手可及。

如今，凸出的、以自我为中心的基本原理已成为向内看的同义

词：对内在自我的探索和向内在化的转变，后者宣称在自我及其（精神或身体）的结构中找到真理和意义。内在化被理解为用以衡量和想象外部世界的内在思考，其产生可能是由于不堪忍受社会某些方面的艰辛所致。同样，它也可能源于消除那些用以（或曾用以）呈现现实的时髦规则的愿望，例如在西方占支配地位的、由国家风格发展起来的学术美学的主导形式。因此，内在化可以看作是一种自我防御的条件反射，是一种侧重于简单的日常现象的内向性的转向，而不是宏大的模式和想法。这种观察在比利时艺术中普遍存在，尤其是在本次展览中，特别是Mark Manders、Berlinde de Bruyckere和Michaël Borremans对魔幻现实主义的“陌生的熟悉”的重新表述。可以在Luc Tuymans、Harold Ancart和Michel François中看到对崇高与简单的分离的探索，而将与自然的联系作为冥想沉思，则是Francis Alys、Edith Dekyndt和Sophie Whettnall的作品的核心。

对作为外向性朝外观看的焦点的凹面而言，它受到众生与事物的相互联系的意识，以及人类、地球、自然和宇宙之间必然存在的关系和相互作用的认识的约束。基于这个信念，没有一个单一的主导实体可



以自称是万物的唯一中心，因为存在的一切都必须存在于一个环境之中，并且不能声称从该环境的外部位置来统治或组织它。因此，这个外在性的概念，是一种诠释人类和非人类的关系的生态的、多边的方式的基本形式。向外运动，趋向于外向性，通常将戏剧的开始与对表面性和妄想的质疑进行类比，或与我们为试图抓住事物的复杂性而武断地解读代码和符号的趋势进行对比。通过对符号和代码进行怪诞的夸张或者是戏剧性的戏码的揭示，以及对常规呈现形式的虚幻和虚构本质的巧辩，这种思考涌入了一个外扬繁茂的、恣意的甚至是漫画化的对世界的呈现形式。这种形式的幽默夸张和外扬繁茂也起到反抗的作用，作为拒绝服从标准化古典学术美的理想标准的姿态。沿着这个纹路，我们能找到Ann Veronica

Janssens对正常秩序的质疑，Harald Thys和Jos De Gruyter所颂扬的对平庸进行的怪诞的变形，以及Jacques Charlier对的备受赞誉的现代艺术风格进行的讽刺性的把玩。Thomas Lerooy的疏离而有趣的挪用，以及Valérie Mannaerts的有机的、发自肺腑的装配艺术作品，都与Koenraad Dedobbeleer对功能性装饰性物体倒置的精炼的古怪属性照相呼应。

主张以凸-凹的辩证关系作为组织原则来处理呈现模式、主导范式或现实压倒性的复杂性，显然与传统概念中艺术对自我与外部世界的参与背道而驰。这一主张创造了一种面对自我意识的趣味的、冥思的当代态度。这种态度将人格作为一种状态，一种永恒的交流 and 转换，置于凸凹关系之中。

1. 上海在20世纪的流行文化中具有举足轻重的地位。Orson Welles 1952年的电影（应该是1947年）的电影《上海小姐》的结尾中的镜子大厅之后，这座城市就一直一直是范式的意象宫殿，是模仿心理操纵、崩溃、自我中心和自我保护的典范场所。按照我们的主张，我们需要将凸透镜和凹透镜从心理层面转移到历史层面，从而追忆低地国家与中国之间不可思议的文化邂逅和交流，从而通过科学观察引入了范式的转换，产生了新的宇宙日心说。

在17世纪，按照他的图纸为中国皇室建造的天文馆中，至今仍以Ferdinand Verbiest的中文名字南怀仁来命名。人们在其中仍然可以体验他的天文计算和观测结果的影响：在天文馆内，南怀仁为复杂的空间凸凹投影而开发的仪器，被用于绘制地球物理学理论中的宇宙，从而产生了一个与宗教背书和教条主义的地心说背道而驰的理论。

关于Ferdinand Verbiest (南怀仁) 的非凡人生和贡献，请参阅：

R.A. Blondeau, *Mandarijn en astronoom: Ferdinand Verbiest, S.J. (1623-1688) aan het Hof van de Chines Keizer* (Brugge: Desclée De Brouwer, 1970).

J.W. Witek, S.J., *Ferdinand Verbiest S.G. (1623-1688): Jesuit Missionary, Scientist, Engineer and Diplomat* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994).

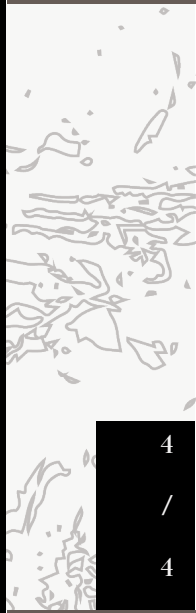
Han Qi & Wu Mi, *Xi chao chong zheng ji: Xi chao ding an (wai san Zhong)* (Beijing, 2006).

Noël Golvers, *Ferdinand Verbiest, S.J. (1623-1688) and the Chinese Heaven* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003).

Noël Golvers (ed.), *Letters of a Peking Jesuit: The*

Correspondence of Ferdinand Verbiest, S.J. (1623-1688) (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2017).

2. 宗教性的地心理论依然可以在一些标题中找到踪迹，比如Thomas Friedman 2005年著作的《世界是平的》(The World is Flat, 2005)。在Friedman这本知名的著作中，他分析了全球化以及伴随着人造的经济的、金融的、唯物的开放贸易的社会而来的进步。在宗教性的、反科学的、原教旨主义概念中一种自然的、“神性的”秩序，坚持地自以为它在与科学的（比如化学和物理）宇宙创造理论进行拉锯战，而Friedman并未提及前者与有感之力的生命的出现和演变之间持续不断的冲突。



Convex or concave directions – in perception, perspectives and reflections – have come to symbolize the multiple exchanges and interrelations of subjectivity. These reflections, stand-ins for the dualism in subjectivity, symbolize the opposing tendencies of an inner self vis-à-vis an outer world – of a gaze turned inwards in contemplation – and of an extrovert and engaging gaze turned outwards. This dualism, defining of the very conception of subjectivity or identity and of the self, is the lens through which this gathering of contemporary Belgian artists has been organized, since that dualism captures a general characteristic, not only of modernity, but also of the artistic endeavors,

and singularity, of Belgian artists. In addition, the choice for this organizing principle finds echoes in the ways in which Chinese artists and intellectuals have tackled modes of representation and dominant paradigms and, in so doing, have transformed the convex-concave dialectics into playful or meditative attitudes to self-awareness.

This delegation of fifteen Belgian artists, some recently emerging on the scene and others internationally acclaimed, not only affirms the inventiveness and creativity of the arts and ideas coming out of Belgium, it also recalls a key moment of intellectual exchange between East and West. In the 17th century, a delegation of scholars

aware of and concerned with conceptions of astronomy, time and space measurement made its way from Europe to China. The envois, which included emissaries from the Low Lands, confronted their technologies for observation, mapping and calculation with those used by Chinese scholars, thus indirectly introducing to China the newest scientific theses concerning the heliocentric model of the solar system, which went against the geocentric model approved by Church authorities. The verification of the heliocentric model required the new instruments for observation that Ferdinand Verbiest (whose Chinese name is Nán Huáirén) built by adapting mathematical models of convex and concave projections of the globe and of space, and which allowed him to apply them in the planetarium that still bears his (Chinese) name today (1). The outsized power of the Church in the West and dominant religious models at the time meant that it could not accept the scientific facts for the heliocentric model that would, in short order, consign the geocentric model to a historical curiosity. Existing Chinese theories were quick to recognize this new paradigm and to assimilate the discoveries it made possible into a view of the planet as an element of an interconnected cosmic reality,

a wide universe with different conceptions of time (2).

With this shift in perspective, the self-centered world that reflected itself in a concave mirror was replaced by a world whose image was convex and whose dynamics were centripetal and/or interconnected. It is worth noting here that the convex and concave mirrors and prisms of telescopes are what had allowed for a precise and detailed observation of the phenomena of nature and the cosmos to come into focus, thus providing another manifestation of the tendency to rely only on empirical, physical and perceivable reality rather than on abstract schemes. One of the traits that distinguishes the art from the Belgian Low Lands from that of neighboring art worlds is its meticulous, precise and detailed observation, not of the grand schemes of philosophers or theoreticians, but of the everyday world, which Belgian artists render with an attention to detail that makes the representations almost palpable.

Today, a concave, self-centered rationale has become synonymous with looking inwards: with an exploration of the inner self and a turn towards interiorization that claims to find truth and meaning in the self and its (mental or bodily)



structure. Interiorization, understood as the inward reflection from which to measure and imagine the outer world, can result from being overwhelmed by the harshness of certain aspects of society. It can stem, as well, from the desire to dismiss the fashionable codes that are (or were) used to represent reality, such as, for example, the ruling forms of academic aesthetics developed by national styles dominant in the West. Interiorization can thus be seen as a self-defensive reflex, as an inward turn that focuses on simple, everyday phenomena rather than on big schemes and ideas. This observation finds an echo in Belgian art in general, and in this exhibition in particular, notably in the reformulations by Mark Manders, Berlinde De Bruyckere and Michaël Borremans of magical realism's 'strangely familiar'. The exploration of the separation between sublime and simple can be read in Luc Tuymans, Harold Ancart and Michel François, while correspondences with nature as a meditative reflection are at the heart of works by Francis Alÿs, Edith Dekyndt and Sophie Whettnall.

The convex, outward-looking focus of exteriority, for its part, is bound to an awareness of the interconnectedness of all beings and things, of the relations and interactions

that necessarily exist between people, the planet, nature and the universe. It is grounded in the conviction that there is no single dominant entity that can claim to be the sole centre of all things, for everything that exists must exist in an environment, and cannot claim to rule or organize it from a position extrinsic to that environment. This conception of exteriority is thus a rudimentary form of an ecological and multilateral approach to human and non-human relations. The movement outwards, towards exteriority, often parallels the beginning of a play with or questioning of the superficiality, delusion, or arbitrariness of the codes and signs with which we try to grasp the complexity of things. Such reflection flows into that of an exuberant, unbridled, even caricatural representation of the world, with its grotesque exaggeration of signs and codes, or its revelation of the theatrical tricks and its rhetoric about the illusory and fictional nature of conventional representations. Such forms of humorous exaggeration and exuberance also function as acts of resistance, as gestures that refuse to submit to the ideals of standardized, Classical academic beauty. Along this vein we find the questioning of the normal order by Ann Veronica Janssens, the grotesque deformation of the banal celebrated by

Harald Thys and Jos de Gruyter, and the ironic play with acclaimed modern art styles developed by Jacques Charlier. Thomas Lerooy's estranging and playful appropriations, and Valérie Mannaerts's organic and visceral assemblages exist alongside the laconic eccentricity of Koenraad Dedobbeleer's inversions of functional, decorative objects.

The proposition for a convex-concave dialectics as the organizational principle for tack-

ling modes of representation, dominant paradigms or the overwhelming complexity of the real, is clearly opposed to conventional conceptions of artistic engagement with self and the world, be it narcissism or the will to power. It is a proposition that formulates a contemporary - playful as well as meditative - attitude to self-awareness, one that situates personhood as a state, as a permanent exchange and transformation, in convex as well as concave set of relations.



1. Shanghai holds an iconic place in twentieth-century popular culture, and ever since the hall of mirrors scene at the end of Orson Welles's *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947), the city has been the paradigmatic imagery palace, the quintessential place wherein to mimic psychological manipulation and breakdown, self-centredness and self-preservation.

For our purposes, we need to shift the convex and concave lenses from the psychological to the historical level and thus recall the incredible cultural encounter and exchange between the Low Lands and China, which resulted in the introduction of a paradigm shift through the scientific observations that bore out the new heliocentric model of the cosmos.

At the planetarium constructed for the Chinese court in the 17th century according to his plans, and which still bears Ferdinand Verbiest's name today (in Chinese, 南怀仁, or Nán Huáirén), one can still experience the effects of his astronomical calculations and observations: there, the instruments Verbiest developed for complex convex and concave projections of space are applied to map the geophysical universe, yielding a model that went against the religiously grounded and dogmatic geocentric model.

On Ferdinand Verbiest's exceptional life and contributions see:

R.A. Blondeau, *Mandarijn en astronoom: Ferdinand Verbiest, S.J. (1623-1688) aan het Hof van de Chinese Keizer* (Brugge: Desclée De Brouwer, 1970).

J.W. Witek, S.J., *Ferdinand Verbiest S.G. (1623-1688): Jesuit Missionary, Scientist, Engineer and Diplomat* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994).

Han Qi & Wu Mi, *Xi chao chong zheng ji: Xi chao ding an (wai san Zhong)* (Beijing, 2006).

Noël Golvers, Ferdinand Verbiest, S.J. (1623-1688) and the Chinese Heaven (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003).

Noël Golvers (ed.), *Letters of a Peking Jesuit: The Correspondence of Ferdinand Verbiest, S.J. (1623-1688)* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2017).

2. Echoes of the religious, geocentric model live on in titles such as Thomas Friedman's *The World is Flat* (2005). In that famous book, Friedman analyses globalization and the progress that follows on the heels of a manmade economic, financial, materialist society of open trade. Friedman does not invoke the ongoing conflict between a religious, anti-scientific, fundamentalist conception of a natural and 'divine' order, a conception that continues to see itself as locked in battle with the scientific - chemical, physical, etc. - model of the creation of the cosmos and the advent and evolution of sentient life.

