

Su-Mei Tse

Beyond

17. Decembre, 2022 -
18. March, 2023

Beyond

by Sofia Eliza Bouratsis

If you were to imagine that Su-Mei Tse, over the course of the works she creates, was writing a text, this text would be a philosophical poem—one whose aesthetics and references would have the same singularity that has characterized her oeuvre since the very beginning: this subtle balance between memory and the present moment, between Asia and the history of European art in the West, between music, object and image, between language and sensibility. Each piece would be equivalent to a word. Some words would be written out in full, and others would only have their initials, some in capitals, others in italics, while some, taking on a differently important role, would be found in footnotes, or in parentheses. But there are also words that would recur over and over again, expressing a meaning that deepens as the text progresses. Extending this thought experiment, you could say that each of her solo exhibitions constitutes a paragraph, part of a whole, part of a continuity that corresponds—at the time it is written—to the artist's research in that present moment, to the *Jetzt=Jetzt*¹ of her current preoccupations, to borrow the title from one of her works which, in this imaginary game, would be written in capital letters.

In this context, *Beyond* comes after *Nested*, a recent major institutional exhibition by the artist,² and after *Enough or Alive*, her last solo exhibition.³ Her initial work on inner understanding, is followed by a development on the premise of self-realisation which – much like a good seed – contributes to the encounter with the other. With *Beyond*, Su-Mei Tse proposes a series of poetic variations, conceived as a potential practice of life or state of mind.

Opening with the word “Freedom” (*Bird Cage*, 2007), the exhibition unravels through a variety of gestures (persevering, precise, sometimes playful), glances (furtive, kept, deepened), and thoughts (welcomed, then released), like a meditation with the mantra “Jenseits der Wolken ist der Himmel blau”⁴. *Beyond* thus becomes the sky-space between the clouds, the silence between words.

Beyond is also an imaginary beyond. *Far Side of the Moon* (2022) is a composition, a collage of real images of the moon, like a freehand painting, in which the artist creates the backside of the moon, the one that is never visible from an earthly perspective.

1 Now=Now

2 Su-Mei Tse, *Nested*, an exhibition presented at Mudam Luxembourg, Aargauer Kunsthau, Yuz Museum in Shanghai and the Taipei Fine Arts Museum between 2017 and 2019.

3 Su-Mei Tse, *Enough or Alive*, Nosbaum Reding (Luxembourg), October 28, 2021–January 22, 2022.

4 Beyond the clouds the sky is blue.

Beyond also unfolds a constellation of lived details, or rather moments of sublimation in which these “almost-nothing[s]”⁵ become—thanks to the artist’s deliberate shiftings of scale—a “whole,” a whole that is simultaneously light and deep, stable and unstable, filled with wonder, fragile and confident.

With calmness and concentration, humour and patience, Su-Mei Tse invites us to rediscover ourselves (*Gaze into deep*, 2022), to take this challenging step towards our own inner depths, but with that fundamental openness that is inherent to joy.

A moment that otherwise might seem futile is thus inscribed into duration and the image of a memory, floating like a déjà-vu, welcomes us into the “sweet present of the present”⁶ (*Mala*, 2022). In this way, *Beyond* becomes an inner gaze that translates something from the untellable.

⁵ Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Le Je-ne-sais-quoi et le Presque-rien*, vol. 1, *La Manière et l’Occasion*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980).

⁶ Jacques Prévert, “Alicante” (1946).