



Some Other Notes

New World

Having a shelter over our heads can be a luxury, having a ground to plant our feet onto can be a privilege (while being made up). Jinwan, the district where I locate, was once part of South China Sea, the land where I sleep above was land reclamation (from sea). Nowadays the filled lands extended even further, and the human eye can no longer see the sea side view that was once the marketing point of my residential area “新世界海滨花园” (New World Seashore Garden). Only five years ago, the seashore was still somewhat next door. Now the seashore has moved, and the buildings stayed behind. Newer real estates will always get better views. It's almost like these houses chased the shore off. For this 14-year-old neighborhood, the sea is still close geologically but cannot be seen, only an imagined seashore when you mutter the magical name “hai bin hua yuan” (seashore garden). The garden part was okay though, with 45% coverage of green inside the neighborhood makes it a very pleasant environment, usually at certain points of the year the trees will grow so wild they can block off half of your balcony view, making living a more private and tropical experience. I liked hiding behind the shades of green and the yellowed concrete, and was very thankful for the company of this full bloom tree that was right in front of my balcony. So when it was the first time for me to experience this tree being cut by wu ye (estate management), I teared up. I felt so betrayed I wrote a melancholy, yet grumpy and sad post about it on my Wechat circle. Then it happened every year, sometimes twice a year. Like with most things that were cut off unexpectedly in this new world, I find myself accepting the reality pretty quickly. I knew my neighbors below didn't like the tree leaves blocking their view. But what was the view? More windows and concrete, wherever you look, there is no seashore, and the garden clearly depends on estate management schedules. It can be quite still. Sometimes you catch a movement of someone hanging their clothes or cooking in smoke, you can almost tell their mood, and almost not. You have to look very hard, it's at an awkward distance for the human eye.

Ghosts

Another neighboring residential area, was named “海外华人新村” (Overseas Chinese Diaspora New Village). It has stayed vacant for almost 30 years, and during the past 20 years, the land around this real estate has been sinking, resulting in some of its buildings to grow 1 to 1.5 meters higher. This estate was also built on reclaimed lands (from sea). I often stroll pass it when I'm on my evening walks, it seems like the only human around is the bao an (security guard) that checks in and out of his little cubicle office next to the rusty metal gates. Sometimes I wonder what exactly is he guarding, and are the houses on their way to be built? Or about to be demolished? It was this intermediate and stagnated state that caught my imagination. Maybe they are for ghosts who live secretly. When I first moved to Jinwan, I despised at the ever-ending



constructions and the crumbled bricks-filled streets, and turned myself to seek life indoors, making and living in semi solitude. This secret life was enhanced as the pandemic hit, and the rooms started to fill with doubts and insecurity. I felt vacant, different kinds of ghosts had come and go, left with this body and the concrete corners of a space that I don't feel connected to. It's a family members' property and has been listing for sale, I was lucky to be able to stay within the time where it's vacant. None of my artworks, photos, nor personal items were blurred out on the estate listing's VR app, it's such a weird experience, you can ghostly wander around all the rooms at the touch of your fingers. It's as if an invisible soul still guards this apartment, for someone who seeks a "seashore garden" of their imagination. Perhaps that New Village security guard lives in a timeless zone, as the kind of living that he guards for never started and may never end. It was still the sea.

Dust and Sparkles

Dreams and hopes live in the cracks, like dust to be gathered and observed. They gather in dents and on untouched surfaces, among the thick density of the living space. For some reason while spending too much time taking care of my daily life, I had sympathized myself with the used wash cloth. I feel like I too have been touching and carving the space I live in, and often felt tired and used, like a piece of rag. Living spaces are always so dirty, with so many things to do, to wash and use and then be washed again. I felt those wash cloth were also me. They have brushed themselves against all kinds of textured surface, smudged through the cracks, they have traveled the most among all other interior objects. They have probably seen all the secrets of the house, and they just absorb, until being abandoned for loss of value. The wash cloth are very gendered objects, they symbolize this invisible labor that were mostly done by women, I felt the need to address it, but I'm not sure if I want to dig into the topic. I like cleaning when I think I'm collecting dust and stains as if collecting mark makings, it's the same logic: movement and friction. But I also hate cleaning because it never ends. It never ends because I haven't stopped living. So maybe living is mark making. It's carving, touching, while being carved and touched. I liked the delicacy of the wash cloth and the brutality of its activity. They are made to endure the unwanted things, until they became the unwanted thing. So I try to use them with the mentality of careful preserving rather than mindless cleansing, like collecting traces that are the exhales of the secretly living ghosts: sparkly, dusty, moist, damp, sometimes crumbling. The cloth will then take on some kind of character: stubborn, grumpy, tired, soft, stiff, stretched, silent, poetic, and beautiful. They are beautiful, and if you look closer, you might see a face.