



August 2021

Interview - The Moon is Leaving Us: A Scientific Exploration of the Arts

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.vtc.edu.hk/ive-de-signed>



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2021) "Interview - The Moon is Leaving Us: A Scientific Exploration of the Arts," *SIGNED: The Magazine of The Hong Kong Design Institute*, 42-45.

Available at: <https://repository.vtc.edu.hk/ive-de-signed/vol25/iss25/13>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Design at VTC Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in SIGNED: The Magazine of The Hong Kong Design Institute by an authorized editor of VTC Institutional Repository. For more information, please contact wchu@vtc.edu.hk.

Interview weivretnl

The Moon is Leaving Us: A Scientific Exploration of the Arts

In Conversation with
multimedia artist Phoebe Hui

「月逝無聲」：以科學探索藝術
專訪多媒體裝置概念藝術家許方華

Text by Peter Wong English Translation by Sunni Zhang

On view at Tai Kwun during the 2021 Art Basel, HKDI lecturer Phoebe Hui's installation "The Moon is Leaving Us" is deemed a thought-provoking experience. Commissioned by Audemars Piguet, the installation is the fifth contemporary art commission of the renowned luxury watchmaker. The Audemars Piguet Art Commission is a biennial competition under the auspices of Audemars Piguet Contemporary, the manufacturer's contemporary art programme. "The Moon is Leaving Us" is the first Art Commission to be exhibited in Asia. We sit down with Hui as she shares her experience and insights on the creative project.

2021年5月巴塞爾藝術博覽會期間，於中環大館同步有一個發人深省的裝置展覽，名為「月逝無聲」(The Moon Is Leaving Us)，為獲選愛彼第5屆當代藝術創作委託計劃藝術家，於香港知專設計學院任教多年的許方華(Phoebe Hui)最新多媒體力作。愛彼藝術創作委託計劃是兩年一度的競賽，由愛彼當代藝術創作項目提供支持，《月逝無聲》是於亞洲舉行的第一個委託計劃展覽。我們專門採訪了許方華，聽她訴說裝置背後的概念和創作體會。

Despite Phoebe Hui's international education background including London and California, she finds her most inspired times in Hong Kong. The City University of Hong Kong graduate concentrated in Editing and Sound Design at school, where all her advisors were working artists. Making arts while delved into academia widened Hui's horizon, and made her realise the importance of research, both as a tool to broaden her perspectives, and a solid foundation to every creative project.

The concept of the latest commissioned work came from Hui's visit to Audemars Piguet's Swiss headquarters in winter. As she was taking her post-dinner gala stroll, the moonlit night and the snow-covered land in complete silence reminded her of a famous ancient Chinese poem on the moon by poet Su Tungpo. People come to snowy mountain for having a meal together when it is a full moon date. Taking the moon as her subject, Hui began her long research journey, including reading about ancient astronomers' observations and explorations of the moon, and interviewing former astronauts of our time who have physically travel in the space.

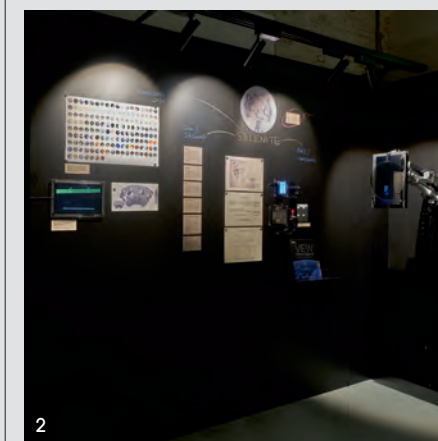
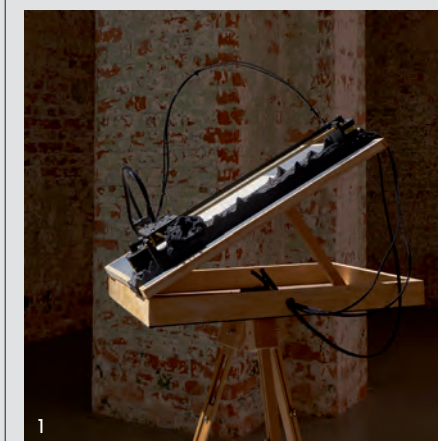
During her research, Hui found out that the moon is departing from the Earth at an annual average speed of 3.78cm. Fascinated by this finding, it became the source of concept for her project. The method of artistic expression, on the other hand, was inspired by "Selenographia, sive Lunae descriptio", an exceptional book by Polish astronomer Johannes Hevelius, in which the moon was described

topographically based on the astronomer's exploration of the moon with his self-invented telescope.

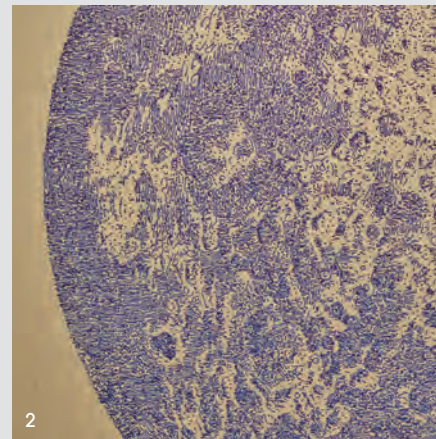
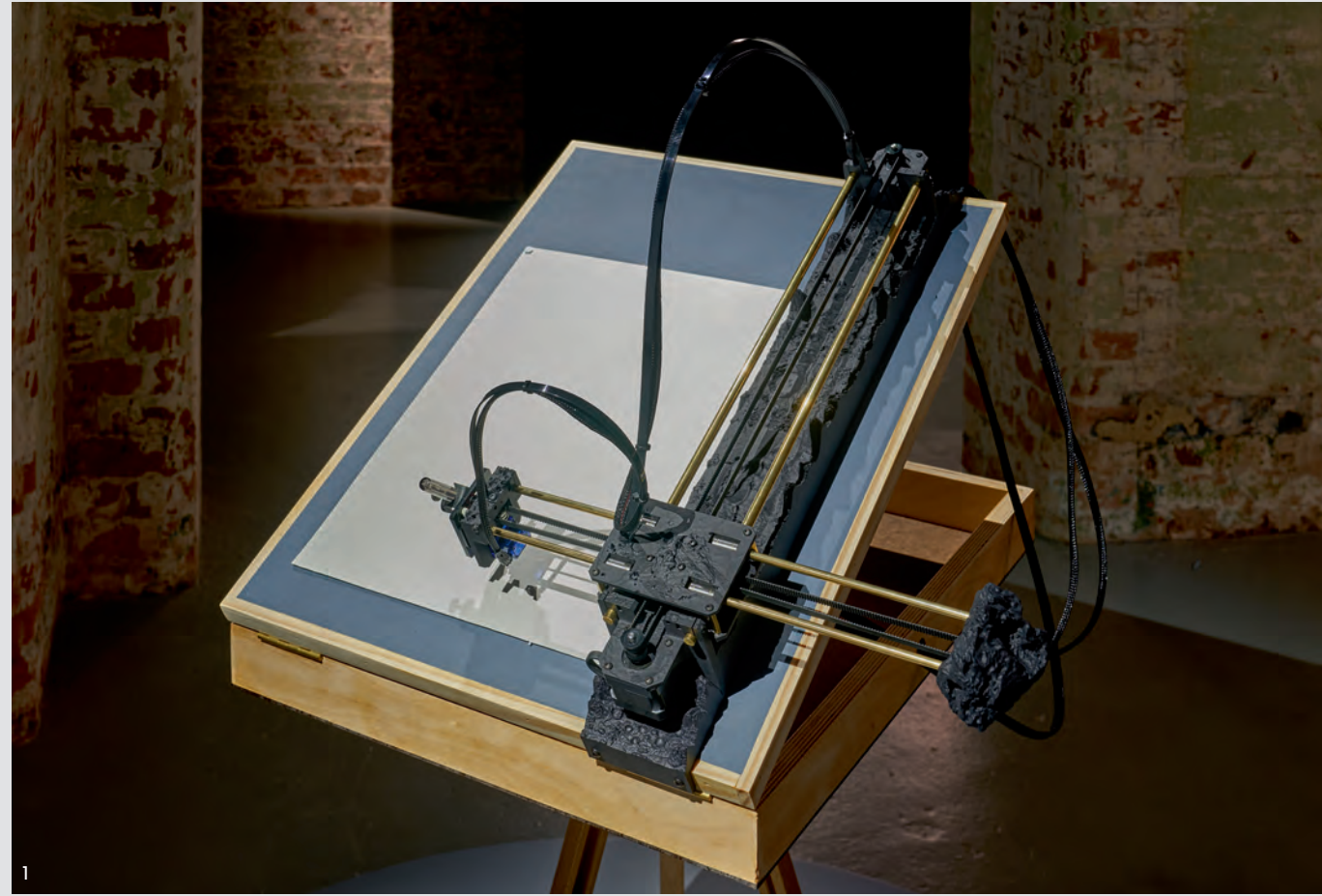
Having the 370-year-old Hevelius illustration of the moon as a core blueprint, a self-developed drawbot named Selena produces drawings based on NASA's open source images in the style of Hevelius. Another work in the exhibition, named Selenite, displays new moon images, generated based on 151 moon representations in the last 300 years in science through machine learning. Hui displays these illustrations through dozens of computer screens assembled on a giant dome structure, reminding visitors of satellites in outer space.

For a different viewing experience, each visitor will be given a polarised lens for looking at the screens on Selenite. The idea came from Hui's research where she found that without polarizers, screens of digital devices appear all blank, as if the experience of viewing the moon through the telescope, revealing the invisible world through instrument.

Hui does not shy away from expressing her interest in technology and machinery as she constantly adopts these concepts in her artworks. On oftentimes being mistaken as an engineer or scientist, Hui comments: "The 20th century was the age for specialisation. Yet, I think of the Renaissance period where artists who would consider questions in both art and science perspective, a holistic way of understanding our world. Our society increasingly faces problems that call for interdisciplinary ways of thinking. Maybe it's because of my avid



1. Self-made drawing robot called Selena
自製繪畫機械人 Selena
2. A section explaining the concept behind the exhibition
展覽一角展示創作概念



1. Self-made drawing robot called Selena
自製繪畫機械人 Selena
2. Details of Selena's drawing inspired by Johannes Hevelius' work
受 Johannes Hevelius 啟發的月球畫作細部
3. Computer screens equipped with polarised lens
裝置了偏光鏡片的電腦屏幕
4. Selenite with dozens of computer screens
裝置了數十部電腦屏幕的 Selenite

curiosity, I always want to explore how a machine works, which is why I chose computer studies and programming as my elective in middle school when my teacher was so certain I'd choose art."

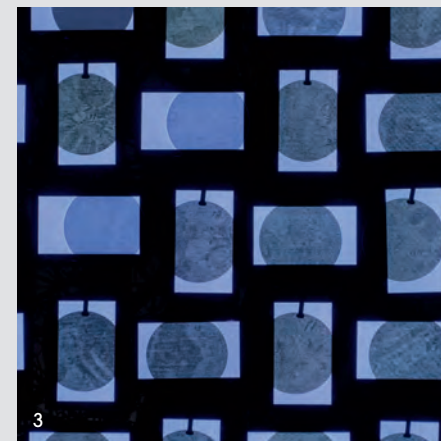
In fact, apart from learning programming, Hui also already began drawing manga, writing poems and contributing to culture magazines in middle school, and continued to do so until she moved for university. "The Moon is Leaving Us" is a sound representation of the artist herself. The exhibit explores the Arts with Science and expresses emotions through rationality. The historical yet innovative installation reinterprets Mother Earth's true companion, in the hope that it will leave a beautiful trace before departing forever.

畢業於香港城市大學「創意媒體系」的許方華，雖然先後負笈倫敦及加州進修，卻坦言最受啟蒙的時期，都在香港。那時她修讀剪接及聲音設計，導師們都是在職創作的藝術家，創作和教學雙管齊下，大大開拓了許方華的眼界，讓她深深感受到做調查做研究的重要性，不單能擴闊她的意念，也為每次創作奠下基礎。

像這次她為委約項目構思的概念，首先源於她在冬季到愛彼位於瑞士的總部參觀，晚宴後走到餐廳外踮腳的時候，看見漆黑中極目皆為雪地，在月亮的映照

下卻充滿寧靜的感覺，讓她聯想起蘇東坡一首名詩「水調歌頭」，月滿之時，大家會相約在雪山共進晚餐，這樣的約定很有趣。由此決定以月亮為靈感，開展了她漫長的調研計劃，不單追溯古代天文學家對月球的研究歷史，更專門採訪前太空人，讓他分享月球的體驗。

同時她發現，月球正以每年3.78釐米的距離離開地球，於是成為她這次創作的概念源頭。至於表現手法的啟迪，則源自許方華發現了一位波蘭天文學家 Johannes Hevelius 於1647年出版的《Selenographia, sive Lunae descriptio》，是人類首本以地圖形式描繪月球的專書，是這位天文學家透過自己研製的超長望遠鏡觀察月球的成果。



結果，許方華決定以 Johannes Hevelius 370多年前的月球繪畫作為核心藍圖，自製繪畫機械人 Selena，以她在美國太空總署公開月球圖片庫裏的特選作品為臨摹對象，繪畫嶄新的月球印象。同場另一作品 Selenite，則以過去300年科學家製作的月相圖和相片為資料基礎，用 machine learning 的方法生成新月相圖，以回應月亮漸漸遠去無法復返的科學事實。然後把這些畫像透過數十個電腦屏幕呈現出來。Selenite 以巨型圓形裝置設計，就像懸掛在外太空一枚正在運行的人造衛星。

有機會到現場觀看裝置展覽的朋友，都會獲發一塊偏光鏡片，在觀看 Selenite 上滿佈的電腦屏幕呈現的嶄新月球畫作，可以收穫另外一種觀賞經驗。這也是許方華之前做調研的時候發現，電腦或手機屏幕如果沒有添加偏光鏡片，大家看到的只是一片空白，就如觀察月亮和世界需要依賴儀器，讓我們看到平日不能見的世界。

因為自己對科技及機械等的興趣，並經常放到作品裏，有時許方華會被誤認為工程師甚至科學家，對此她這樣解說，「20世紀是專門化的，但在文藝復興時代，藝術家都會循藝術及科技的角度思考問題，是一個認識世界的整全方式。現在我們的社會正面對愈來愈複雜的問題，實在需要跨領域的思考方式，人們

在討論事物時需要牽涉更多範疇。也許是我的好奇心特別重的緣故吧，遇上一些機器之類，我會很好奇到底它們是如何運作的。所以我在中學時已經選修電腦，那時老師還以為我應該會選藝術。」

事實上，許方華在中學時期已經有畫漫畫及寫詩，並投稿文化雜誌，到大學環境改變了才沒有繼續。難怪這次「月逝無聲」裝置展覽會以月球繪畫為主題，卻以一種嶄新的機械手法演繹，是許方華結合科學與藝術的精彩之作，以科學探索藝術，以理性演繹感性，重新詮釋陪伴地球億萬年的月球，既傳統又創新，期望在她永遠離去之前，留下美麗的痕跡。

