

JIANG ZHI - ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

*POST PAUSE* (2004), DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

On the day of filming, I was up very early, long before dawn. But the streets were already filling with pedestrians. I struggle to make out their faces under the dim twilight, telling myself they must be just like me, in a hurry to some business appointment. Here are a couple of small traders, over there, a rather inebriated looking young guy drags himself along; closely behind are bunch of women in heavy makeup, seemingly just back from plying their trade on the night street, warily stumbling on.

I keep thinking maybe I should stop and film all these silhouetted figures of all shape and sizes wriggling their way around on the pavement. The twilight sky above this large city is still immersed in a deep, mysterious blue hue.

Everything is ready. Dozens of actors are lined up in position on the footbridge waiting for the cue to shoot the crawling scene. A horrifying shriek rang out from under the overpass, drawing the attention of all who are present. The street cleaner is a middle age women, huddled up against the concrete pillar and shaking, broom cast aside. The eyes of the onlookers suddenly catch a dead brown cat lying next to her feet, while a car can be seen swerving around the corner, speeding off towards the expressway and disappearing in the traffic.

Mundane daily life, mixed in with absurd and incongruous scenes like these, play out in the city day after day.

After a brief conference, we decided to continue filming, and so the actors are again asked to prostrate themselves. I have been charged with the task of demonstration. As I bend over, a conversation I had with the maker of this film flashed across my mind: "Everyone is like this. One moment they crawl with their fingers in the mud, the next moment they may be sticking their noses up at you walking down the street and ignoring everything around them."

In Shenzhen, the rapidly evolving city where I currently live, there is perhaps the highest proportion of dreamers in the whole country. Many came penniless and destitute, having brought with them only the determination to savagely scrape together a fast buck in a few short years. As the Deng Xiaoping saying goes: "The most virtuous ethic is the virtue to pursue development." At any moment, the dreamers are ready to bring their dreams to fruition, and apparently willing to do so for any price.

Here, where there is a flyover that leads to one's dream, thousands have lined up waiting for their turn, waiting for the conveyer belt to carry them off into the heaven of their dreams. In the heaven in their dreams houses and cars abound and they are surrounded by every description of beautiful things that not only smell good, but also feel good and shine brightly. In contemporary China, people have come to equate such a heaven with "success".

In the city streets, I might encounter many strange and wonderful things. Those people we see are like actors on a stage. Those sets and scenes look no different from a directed play in progress. It was only much later that I become conscious of the fact that this is reality in its true form. That one individual with that group of people over there, with the motions they are acting out, are all controlled by a hand. This may originate from organizational leaders behind the scene, their bosses, their husbands, mistresses, or perhaps it might be the factory, the company, or even these people themselves..

However, I am only directing a small segment in this short film. I would like to suggest this is a response to the issues brought forth by the characters. In those embarrassing realities yet to receive people's attention there is also the fantasy world that we are so insistently infatuated with - only when I can examine these two worlds in parallel may the prying curiosity in me be satisfied.

It is for these reasons that I cannot stop recording,

no more than I can abandon creative narrative.

I have been searching for a way the characters in my film might come together in a vessel containing their gazes, which will allow them to reflect upon each other, to confront each other, to gnaw at each other, and to nourish each other.

We are living in an imperfect world; one may even say a cruel world. But, perhaps, only such a world can be attractive to us. Within such a world, we endure all kinds of hardships, but are also capable of giving progeny to creative narratives...