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## 蔡明亮電影《臉》 初探在美術館創作的電影藝術

何重誼<sup>1</sup>、林志明<sup>2</sup>

Tsai Ming-liang's *Face* and  
the Art of Movie-making in a Museum

Jean-Yves Heurtebise  
&  
Chin-Ming Lin

**關鍵詞：**蔡明亮、楚浮、美術館、電影、羅浮宮、《沙樂美》

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<sup>1</sup> 本文作者現任輔仁大學法國語文學系助理教授與法國現代中國研究中心兼任研究員。  
Assistant Professor, French Department, FuJen Catholic University & Associate Researcher, CEFC.

<sup>2</sup> 本文通訊作者現任國立臺北教育大學藝術與造形設計學系教授。  
Professor, Department of Arts and Design, National Taipei University of Education.  
E-mail: lin0214@tea.ntue.edu.tw

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## 摘要

這篇論文的目標在於透過蔡明亮的第九部長片《臉》的深度分析來探討美術館和電影之間的關係。這部電影是蔡明亮所導演的影片中成本最高的一部。然而，就許多層面而言，它也是他最具實驗性質的一部影片。這部影片立基於一段自我指涉的敘述：影片中作為主角的導演，其任務乃是要以羅浮宮為場景拍攝《沙樂美》的故事。更精確地說，這部影片敘說的是導演在影片拍攝過程中所遭遇的許多困難（包括個人層面的和職業層面的）。最後，這部影片談的也是電影進入美術館的困難，它在其中將會面對其它的藝術作品（而作為此一困難的徵兆便是《臉》這部影片只有到了最後才以間接和地下管道的方式進入羅浮宮和其中的著名繪畫相遇），但它談的也是在一個電影已成為娛樂產業一部份的時代裡，藝術電影進入美術館的必要性。我們的論文將會分成兩大部份：第一部份將探討電影和其自身以及電影史的關係如何反映出電影處於其它藝術形式之中時的地位；論文的第二部份將會著重於電影和美術館的關係（後者傳統乃是作為以展出繪畫、素描及雕塑為職志的場域）以及這個關係如何反映出電影製作的性質和特點。

## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to address the issue of the relation between Museum and Cinema through an in-depth analysis of Tsai Ming-liang's ninth feature films *Face*. It is the most expensive film directed by Tsai Ming-Liang. But it is also, in many ways, his most experimental one. The film is based on a self-referential narrative: it is a movie about a director whose task is to shot the story of *Salome* in the settings of the Louvre. More precisely, it is a movie about the many difficulties (both at the personal and professional levels) that the director will encounter in the process of directing his film. Finally, it is a movie about the difficulty of films to enter into museum, and to confront to the artworks of a museum (symptomatic of this difficulty is the fact that *Face* confronts itself to the Louvre's famous paintings only at the very end of the film and in a very indirect and subterranean fashion) – as well as perhaps the necessity for artistic films to do it in an age where cinema has become one part of the (capitalist) entertainment industry. Our article will be divided in two parts: the first part of the article will analyze how the relation of the movie to itself and to the history of cinema is reflecting the question of the place of Cinema among other art forms; the second part of the article will analyze how the relation of the film to museum as a place classically dedicated to the exhibition of paintings, drawings and sculptures is reflecting the question of the nature and specificity of the movie-making process.

The aim of this paper is to address the issue of the relation between Museum and Cinema through an in-depth analysis of Tsai Ming-liang's ninth feature film *Face*. It takes three years for Tsai Ming-liang to finalize the shooting and editing of this movie directed at the request of the Louvre – likely an answer to Musée d'Orsay-sponsored Hou Hsiao-hsien's film, *Flight of the Red Balloon* (*Le voyage du ballon rouge*, 2007) and a typical example of what Michelle Bloom calls "Sino-French Cinema": "The Sino-French characterizes cinema in which the Sinophone and Francophone worlds collaborate, intermingle, or overlap. Such connections may go in either direction and take many forms. Funding might provide a link, for instance, when the French finance a Taiwanese film. Personnel, including the director, cast, and crew, may be composed of Francophone, Sinophone, or Sino – French members, or – mostly likely – a combination. [...] The resulting films take place at least partly in France, with dialogue principally in French. These films most often feature audio cameos in one or more Sinophone language." (Bloom, 2015: 4).

With a total budget of 3,875,000 euros, 20% of which was contributed by the Louvre, it is the most expensive film directed by Tsai Ming-Liang. But it is also, in many ways, its most experimental one. The film is based on a self-referential narrative: it is a movie about a director whose task is to shoot the story of *Salome* in the settings of the Louvre. More precisely, it is a movie about the many difficulties (both at the personal and professional levels) that the director will encounter in the process of directing his film. Finally, it is a movie about the difficulty of films to enter into museum, and to confront to the artworks of a museum (symptomatic of this difficulty is the fact that *Face* confronts itself to the Louvre's famous paintings only at the very end of the film and in a very indirect and subterranean fashion) – as well as perhaps the necessity for artistic films to do it in an age where cinema has become one part of the (capitalist)

entertainment industry.

Movies about making movies are not something original in the past or recent history of cinema (from Federico Fellini *8 ½* to Truffaut's *La nuit américaine* and Jean-Luc Godard's *Passion*) but what is original and new is the fact that this movie-making process is occurring inside or in the close vicinity of one of the biggest and oldest museums in the world, i.e. the Louvre. Thus Tsai Ming-liang's *Face* is not only a movie about a movie and about all the problems that are related to this process in terms of personal relations between members of the crew, unpredictable reaction of actors to their roles, power relations between the director and the movie industry, etc. It is also a movie about the relationship between cinema and other fine arts, between films and museum. Here lies the dual originality of the movie: it is not only a movie about the film-making process but a movie about the movie-making process mediated by its relations to other forms of art and art-making; it is not simply a movie about a museum but a movie about how to relate cinema to Art and how to articulate the visual experience of films with the visual experience of seeing paintings, drawings, and sculptures in a museum of fine arts.

Our article will be divided in two parts: the first part of the article will analyze how the relation of the movie to itself and to the history of cinema is reflecting the question of the place of Cinema among other art forms; the second part of the article will analyze how the relation of the film to museum as a place classically dedicated to the exhibition of paintings, drawings and sculptures is reflecting the question of the nature and specificity of the movie-making process. It will propose an analysis of the film by exploring its intertextual links with Truffaut, its relation with the museum, and with the story of Salome – three points that are intimately correlated in *Face*.

If Tsai Ming-liang's *Face* is a movie about a movie, it is not simply, as we

will explain first, because it narrates the story of a Taiwanese director directing a movie in the Louvre with French actors, i.e. it is not only because its filmic narrative closely mimics reality. If Tsai Ming-liang's *Face* is a movie about a movie, it is also, as we will analyze later, because its relation to itself is mediated and deepened by its relations to other films (Lim, 2014).

At the first level, Tsai Ming-liang's *Face* is a movie about a movie in the sense that it partially reflects its own making process. It narrates the difficulties of a Taiwanese director (Hsiao-Kang played by Lee Kang-sheng) to shoot in the Louvre the film he was asked to produce and the personal and professional troubles he encountered during the filming: at the personal level, the mother of the director (played by Lu Yi-ching) died while he is in France; at the professional level, the director has some communicational issues with the producer (played by Fanny Ardant), fails to handle the erratic behavior of the leading actor (Antoine – played by Jean-Pierre Léaud), and has an ambiguous fetishist/sadistic relationship with the leading actress (played by Laetitia Casta). These difficulties narrated by the film are obviously related to the experience of Tsai Ming-liang himself during the three years, from 2007 to 2009, during which he was coping with the making of the movie. The difficulties consubstantial with the making of a film are expressed directly or indirectly at different moments of the movie. Its most obvious symbolic expression being the sequence of the water leak that Hsiao-Kang handles so catastrophically: all his actions to repair the leaking pipes of the kitchen sink make things getting worse and, at the end, the whole apartment is flooded. Flooded to the point that there is almost no more difference between the outside and the inside of the aquarium in which a big red parrot fish is swimming. As a consequence, the bed on which the sick mother is lying floats over the water (like Moses floating in a basket on the Nile): the water-leak could symbolize the rupture of the amniotic sac prelude to childbirth, as if the mother disease makes her becoming a new-born again to whom his son

is now in charge of. Actually, water plays a symbolic role in most Tsai Ming-liang's movies: "In *Rebels*, the flooded apartment implies Ah-tze's stagnant and aimless life. In *The River*, water imagery is utilized to represent characters' different sexual desires, activities, and identities. In contrast, the lack of water in *The Wayward Cloud* signifies the lack of love in a porn-flooded city. In *I don't want to sleep alone*, a pool of water in an abandoned building provides an uncanny haven for the three social outsiders. In *The Hole*, water functions a force of destruction as well as a symbol of humanity and equity." (Chang, 2008). In Tsai's movies, water is a disruptive force that connotes both desire and crisis.

The agony of the mother is highly symbolic of the feelings of frustration, remorse, and guilt of the director: not only has the director left his mother despite her disease to go to France to shoot the movie but the announcement of her death occurred in the midst of his homosexual intercourse with a French man (played by Mathieu Amalric) in Tuileries garden near the Louvre, interrupting it by a phone call announcing this traumatic event. The mother symbolizes the "Natal", the place of birth, Taiwan (Lee Kang-sheng is Taiwanese, but Tsai Ming-liang is by birth Malaysian).

Another symbolic expression of the difficulties of the movie-making process is embodied by the stag who appears at different times: first, ignoring of the law of illusions that defined Cinema, the stag runs into the many mirrors of the stage; second, Fanny Ardant, the producer, carries an heavy mounted stag head in the underground corridors of the Louvre which may symbolize the "heaviness" of her financial responsibility (the fact that is the *head* of a stag has also another symbolic signification that we will explain later); third, at the end, the real and the fictional director of *Face*, i.e. Tsai Ming-liang and Lee Kang-sheng, reunited together beside the Grand basin of Tuileries garden, try to tame and appease a stag as indocile and wild as Art.

At the second and deeper level, Tsai Ming-liang's *Face* is a movie about a movie because it is related to other movies of Tsai Ming-liang himself. First, *Face* stars Lu Yi-ching and Lee Kang-sheng who are the two actors present in most Tsai's films: from *Rebels of the Neon God* in 1992 to *Stray Dogs* in 2013, the whole Tsai Ming-liang's features films cast Lee Kang-sheng as the main actor while Lu Yi-ching appears in most of them with the exception of *The Hole* (1998), *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (2003), and *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone* (2006). Moreover, in 5 of 7 films in which both Lee Kang-sheng and Lu Yi-ching appear together, Lu Yi-ching acts as the mother of the character played by Lee Kang-sheng: in *Rebels of the Neon God* (1992), *The River* (1997), *What Time Is It There?* (2001), *The Wayward Cloud* (2005) and *Face* (2009). Another self-reference is that the name of the director in *Face*, i.e. Hsiao-Kang, is similar to the name of the character played by Lee Kang-sheng in Tsai's first feature film, i.e. *Rebels of the Neon God* (Hsiao-Kang is actually the diminutive of Lee Kang-sheng). This does not illustrate only the fidelity of Tsai Ming-liang to his actors but also contributes to build his own artistic (and ethic) universe (one can also note that Tsai, Lee and Yu are the three owners of Taipei's Tsaiilelu *café* celebrated in Tsai's short movie *Remembrance*(date?) exhibited in the XueXue Institute).

But the relation of *Face* to Tsai's films is even more subtle and precise: 2009 *Face* echoes in many ways 2001 *What Time Is It There?*. First, as already said, Lee Kang-sheng acts as Hsiao-kang and Lu Yi-ching as his mother in both films. Second, the first and last sequences of these two films were shot in similar places: the first sequences of both *What Time Is It There?* and *Face* take place in a familiar Taiwanese apartment with its iconic Taitung green rice cooker on the table in the front, its aquarium with big fish on the right and its kitchen behind; the last sequence of both *What Time Is It There?* And *Face* take place around the circular pond of Tuileries garden in Paris. In both *What Time Is It There?* And

*Face*, Taipei and Paris are visually and narratively connected. Third, *What Time Is It There?* And *Face* share similarities in terms of narrative content and symbolic meaning: *What Time Is It There?* narrates the alienation and estrangement that both Hsiao-kang (Lee Kang-sheng) and Shiang-chyi (Chen Shiang-chyi) feel relatively to their immediate surroundings. Shiang-chyi suffers from the psychological troubles of living abroad while Hsiao-Kang is longing for Shiang-chyi's life abroad while being confronted to the tragic mourning of his mother after her husband passed away. Similarly in *Face*, Hsiao-kang suffers from home-sickness and communication difficulties in a foreign place, and from the sadness of mourning at home. The fact that there are so many correlations between the two films, the fact that Tsai is quoting himself and plays with his own filmography expresses his authorship on the film. It demonstrates also, more generally, that creative films directors are artists on their own and that Cinema belongs to world of Art, with an equal esthetic value than other artistic art forms.

But, there is another point of convergence between *What Time Is It There?* And *Face* – and it is this point which relates *Face* not only to Tsai's films but to the films of others. In *What Time Is It There?*, Hsiao-kang, cloistered in his room out of the fear of the phantom of his father and due to the depressive mourning behavior of his mother, escapes reality by watching movies and one film in particular, François Truffaut's emblematic New wave film *Les quatre cents coups*: “The presence of Jean-Pierre Léaud in *Ni nabanjidian?* can be seen as a simple citation – a homage to a great director and a great actor. We could therefore analyze this transplant – the present and aging body of the French actor in a Taiwanese cinematography that is already ‘classical’ and no longer ‘new’ – as a cultivated and respectful citation. But it is also, I will argue, a poetic declaration that involves Tsai's personal work as well as the entire production of Taiwanese art films.” (Neri, 2006). Actually, this homage sequence to Truffaut as well as Jean-Pierre Leaud's cameo in the Montmartre cemetery in *What Time Is It*

*There?* will play an important part in the Louvre invitation to Tsai Ming-liang to make the film that will become *Face*: “Tsai is a quintessentially transnational director whose admiration for the French New Wave in general and the work of François Truffaut and Jean-Pierre Léaud in particular is well-known and has been widely discussed. He has been rightly heralded as someone who could renew and develop the French New Wave tradition, and, in that sense, it didn’t come so much as a surprise to see Henri Loyrette, director of the Louvre Museum, requiring his service to establish stronger bonds between modern art and the Louvre’s collection” (Bordeleau, 2013).

At the third and deepest level, Tsai Ming-liang’s *Face* is a movie about a movie because it is related to other movies than Tsai’s movies only. *Face* is a movie about a movie because it refers to the history of cinema in general and especially because, in many ways, it can be seen as a cinematographic tribute to François Truffaut (1932-1984). Tsai Ming-liang acknowledges this strong correlation between Truffaut and *Face*: “What was really great about the Louvre’s invitation was that it coincided with a Truffaut retrospective somewhere in France. And I was invited there as well because my film *What Time Is It There?* featured a short homage to Truffaut, so I ended up seeing that film with all of Truffaut’s regularly used actors right there in the venue. That in itself was a very touching moment for me, and the next day the invitation by the Louvre Museum arrived. So now that invitation was for me inexorably linked with Truffaut’s films.” (Vin, 2010)

The fact that *Face* is an artistic homage to François Truffaut is evidenced in many ways. First, *Face* stars many famous French actors such as Jean-Pierre Léaud, Jeanne Moreau, Fanny Ardant, Mathieu Amalric, and Nathalie Baye. Among them, Jean-Pierre Léaud, Jeanne Moreau, Fanny Ardant and Nathalie Baye share the particularity of having been associated to many Truffaut’s films.

Nathalie Baye played in Truffaut's *La Nuit américaine* (1973), *L'Homme qui aimait les femmes* (1977), and *La Chambre verte* (1978) – a film about the desire to honor the memory of the dead. Fanny Ardant was the leading actress in Truffaut's *La Femme d'à côté* (1981) and *Vivement dimanche!* (1983), and she was also Truffaut's wife in his last years (1981-1984). Jeanne Moreau played in *Jules et Jim* (1962) – perhaps the most influential film of Truffaut, and *La Mariée était en noir* (1966). In one sequence of *Face*, the three women are reunited together waiting for someone who is not coming (François Truffaut indeed) – in the background, a song can be heard: the soundtrack of *Jules et Jim*, the famous song “Le Tourbillon de la vie” sang by Jeanne Moreau herself... Moreover, this sequence is shot in Louvre Napoleon's apartment (French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte's dining room): thus, it literarily conveys art and history at the same table – giving to cinema actresses and by extension to Cinema an equal historical standing than other forms of Art exhibited in the Louvre.

Last but not least, Jean-Pierre Léaud, the main actor of *Face*, was the most important actor of the French Nouvelle Vague. Jean-Pierre Léaud plays in six Truffaut's films: *Les quatre cents coups* (1959), *Antoine et Colette* (1962), *Baisers volés* (1968), *Domicile conjugal* (1970), *La nuit américaine* (1973), *L'amour en fuite* (1979) – and in nine Godard's feature films: *Alphaville* (1965), *Pierrot le fou* (1965), *Masculin Féminin* (1966), *Made in U.S.A.* (1966), *La chinoise* (1967), *Week-end* (1967), *Le gai savoir* (1969), *Détective* (1985). Jean-Pierre Léaud started his actor career at the age of 14 in Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups*. The relation between Jean-Pierre Léaud and François Truffaut is on par with the relation between Tsai Ming-liang and Lee Kang-sheng (Bordeleau, 2011) as Tsai Ming-liang himself acknowledges – while introducing a subtle difference: “I've got the feeling that Truffaut utilizes Léaud to tell things about himself. When I film Xiao Kang, he is my starting point, and then I add my personal feelings” (Ciment & Tobin, 2010).

Tsai Ming-liang and Lee Kang-sheng are not only the most emblematic and favorite actors of the two directors but they are also the director's alter ego: all Truffaut's movies in which Jean-Pierre Léaud plays includes references to Truffaut's own life. Moreover, Léaud's character name in *Face* is Antoine: Antoine Doinel was the name of Jean-Pierre Léaud's character in Truffaut's series of four autobiographical films: from *Les quatre cents coups* to *L'amour en fuite*. Reuniting Jean-Pierre Léaud and Lee Kang-sheng in the same film tells much about Tsai's understanding of Cinema as artistic filiation. Finally, the fact that Lee Kang-sheng is playing in this movie the role of Tsai Ming-liang himself, i.e. the director, makes Lee's contribution to Tsai's creative production even clearer – not only in terms of narrative through Lee's improvisation but emotionally in terms of creative inspiration which, according to Tsai, emerges from the contemplation of Lee's face: "I watched him [Lee Kang-sheng] consume that head of cabbage with 20 years of his life. He cried, and I cried too. We have worked together from 1991 to 2012, and all I can say is that his face is my cinema". (De Giuli, 2013). As Tsai Ming-liang said in an interview in New York in November 2009 about *Face*: "The most important are the faces of Jean-Pierre Léaud and Lee Kang-sheng. They are the core of the film" (Tsai, 2009).

Second, the most obvious reference to Truffaut in *Face* occurs when Fanny Ardant leafs through a book dedicated to Truffaut's films. What is more telling is the peculiar moment of the film when Truffaut's picture appears: after the death of the director's mother, Fanny Ardant, the producer, accompanies Hsiao Kang on his trip back to Taiwan. During the evening, sitting at the table where the small altar for the mother is placed, surrounded by funeral offerings such as fruits and cakes, Fanny Ardant looks at this book dedicated to Truffaut while negligently taking a wax apple (蓮霧) from one of the plate. This sequence is rich in meaning. The fact that the picture of the defunct mother and the picture of

a deceased Truffaut share the same visual space bears a clear symbolic meaning: if it is true that the mother embodies Taiwan, the Natal, the Earth, and bodily connection, thus it seems also clear that Truffaut embodies France, the Foreign, Art (in its cinematographic form), and spiritual filiation: “Fathers are conspicuously absent from the contemporary ‘Sino-French’ films of Taiwanese directors Cheng Yu-chieh, Hou Hsiao-hsien and their compatriot by adoption, Malaysian-born Chinese Tsai Ming-liang. Whether dead, long lost or geographically distant, fathers leave gaping holes in the lives of the family members they leave behind. These patriarchs may be out of the picture, figuratively, but they are paradoxically present by virtue of their absence. They are not only referred to in dialogue, but also represented through their images, voices or even signatures. These absent fathers represent French cinema and particularly 1950s films. The French auteurs who serve as the ‘cinematic fathers’ of the contemporary Taiwanese directors are especially but not exclusively New Wave directors, with an emphasis on Francois Truffaut” (Bloom, 2014).

Moreover, the sacrilegious act of Ardant eating one of the fruits offered to the defunct can also involve the notion that filiation does not imply the conventional imitation of the works of the person to which we want to pay homage: honoring the memory of Truffaut is not copying his films but making films that are today as new and original as were Truffaut’s first movies in his time. When Ardant is eating the wax apple, one can also notice, through the aquarium acting as a prism, that the defunct mother is also eating one: both of them, side by side, one paying homage to Truffaut, her former husband, and the other accepting it from his son.

Third, the less obvious manifestation of this tribute to Truffaut is embodied by a sparrow. In the introductory sequence of the movie, Hsiao Kang, just arrived from Taipei, is waiting to meet with Antoine, who forgot this appointment. Hsiao

Kang then picks up the white feather of a bird on the ground – the next image is an image of bird feathers on a barbed wire. At this moment of the movie this image does not make much sense. But the association between the aerial bird feather and the sharp barbed wire is quite powerful in terms of pure poetical imagery. Later in the movie, the director and Antoine, waiting for the other members of the crew, are “speaking” to each other – actually speaking without words since they don’t know how to speak the language of the other. In this sequence, Antoine is playing with a bird. The bird is a bridge between Antoine and Hsiao Kang, a mediator (one can remember than in, Greek mythology, the God of mediation was Hermes, the God with winged ankles). Then, Antoine (Léaud maybe improvising) associates to the sparrow the names of famous movie directors: by association of ideas, Antoine evokes first Pasolini’s *Uccellacci e Uccellini* (*uccello* means bird in Italian) and, then, other famous movie directors such as Pasolini, Antonioni (actually quoted by Lee in their “dialogue”), Orson Welles, Mizoguchi, Buster Keaton, Murnau, Chaplin, and Dreyer. During this short dialogue, Antoine claims that the bird represents all these directors (let us also remark that Antoine not only names Orson Welles but also *The Lady of Shanghai*: this movie is famous for his last sequence where the characters have a gunfight in a maze of mirrors– multifold mirrors constitute also the background of the discussion between Antoine and Hsiao Kang in this sequence).

Then, Antoine gives the sparrow to Lee while saying: “it is a gift”. Obviously, the gift of cinema. Finally, after having associated these names to the bird, Antoine adds: “everyone has left but kitty [the nickname of the bird] stays”. When Antoine said “everyone has left” he is referring to the other members of the crew in the film. But there is also another meaning: “everyone has left” refers also to these famous directors who passed away – “but only the bird stays” meaning that the Cinema still survives. Finally, later in the movie, Antoine, after

having protected the sparrow from the snow in his coat, buries its body carefully, with great respect, while chanting some Tibetan-like ritual songs in a Parisian cemetery (likely in Montmartre Cemetery where Truffaut himself is buried). This symbolic connection between the sparrow and Cinema illustrates again the notion of cinematographic artistic filiation through its own history and reinforces the claim that Cinema is a form of Art.

First, we analyzed how the relation of *Face* to the film-making process in general, to the other films of Tsai Ming-liang and to the films of other directors, notably those of François Truffaut, is linked to the specific issue of the place of Cinema among other art forms. Second, we will analyze how the relation of the film to museum as a place classically dedicated to the exhibition of paintings, drawings and sculptures is reflecting the question of the nature and specificity of the movie-making process.

To that effect, we have to introduce a new element of Tsai's *Face* that we have not yet addressed. The first title of *Face* was *Salome*. Salome (c. AD 14 – between 62 and 71) was the daughter of Herod II and Herodias. According to Flavius Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities*: “Herodias, was married to Herod, the son of Herod the Great, who was born of Mariamne, the daughter of Simon the high priest, who had a daughter, Salome; after whose birth Herodias took upon her to confound the laws of our country, and divorced herself from her husband while he was alive, and was married to Herod, her husband's brother by the father's side, he was tetrarch of Galilee” (Josephus, 2008, XVIII). There is, in the history of Salome, the first scandal of Salome's mother divorcing to marry to the brother of his first husband (not unlikely Hamlet's mother). But there is another scandal related by Mark the Evangelist in the *New Testament*: “And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; And when the daughter of the said

Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, “Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee”. And he swore unto her, “Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom”. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, “What shall I ask?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist”. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, “I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist”. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath’s sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.” (Mark, 6: 21). The second scandal comes from the fact, according to Mark, the king, because of his impure desire for the daughter of his wife, accepted to slaughter a saint whom he honored and respected.

*Face* is not only a movie set in the Louvre but a movie about a director in the process of making a film related to the story of Salome. The encounter between Cinema and Museum is therefore reinforced by an encounter between films and other art forms since the story of Salome has inspired many artists before Tsai Ming-liang. The representation of Salome with the head of Saint John Baptist was a frequent topic (subject?) of representation in the paintings of the Italian and Flemish Renaissance (Filippo Lippi, Lucas Cranach the Elder, Titian) and the Baroque (Caravaggio, Guido Reni, and even Rembrandt, etc.). Then it re-emerges as an important artistic trend in the second half of the nineteenth century especially in France and, to a lesser extent, in UK. At this moment, Salome was the iconic figure of symbolist writers and painters: in literature, it inspires one of the three novellas (*Herodias*) of Flaubert’s *Three Tales*, poems of Mallarmé and Théodore de Banville and Oscar Wilde’s eponymous drama *Salomé* (it should be noted that Wilde wrote it in French not in English); in

painting, it inspires symbolist painters in France (Henri Regnault, Gustave Moreau, Jean Benner, etc.), the pre-Raphaelites in UK (Anning Bell), and in Europe (Franz von Stuck, Klimt, etc.); in music, the story of Salome constitutes the basis of the two operas of Jules Massenet (*Hérodiade*, 1881) and Richard Strauss (*Salomé*, 1905). Thus the story of Salome is a well-known religious and artistic topic for the French cultivated audience. It is thus quite coherent to associate the story of Salome with the settings of the Louvre. But this association between Salome and the Louvre is sustained and magnified by the fact that, among the most famous paintings of the Louvre, are Leonardo da Vinci's paintings entitled *Saint John the Baptist* and *Virgin of the Rocks* – both of them depicting Saint John both as an adult and as a child.

The story of Salome is introduced in Tsai's *Face* in a very gradual, subtle and metaphoric way: it culminates with the antepenultimate sequence of “nightmare” of Hsiao Kang where director takes abruptly the place of the actor playing Saint John (Norman Atun, a Malaysian actor).

The first hint of the story of Salome appears in the second sequence of the movie where the mother of Hsiao Kang chops meat on a round wooden cutting board: there may be a metaphoric analogy with the head of Saint John the Baptist that will be presented to Salomé on a round silver plate. This analogy is reinforced by the fact that the meat balls that the mother is cooking are named in Chinese 獅子頭, i.e. literally “head of lion” – here there is not only a reference to an head (an head separated from its body) but also to an animal, the Lion that is the allegoric symbol of Mark who is one of the two Evangelists (with Matthew the Apostle) who narrated the story of Salome.

The allegoric presence of the story of Saint John the Baptist is also represented by the mounted stag head that Fanny Ardant is painfully carrying in the underground corridors of the Louvre: this allusion is reinforced by the fact

that Ardant is playing in *Face* the role of Herodias who wanted the death of Saint John the Baptist and asked her daughter Salome to dance to reclaim his head.

In *Face*, Salome is played by Laetitia Casta. Laetitia Casta was the main top model of Jean-Paul Goude, a rather iconoclast French publicist, and she appeared in many advertisements in France at this time. As an actress, she also starred in Raoul Ruiz's *Les âmes fortes* (2001) and in Taviani Brothers' *Luisa Sanfelice* (2004). Before its direct embodiment of the character of Salome, Casta appears in five different sequences that illustrates different facets of the character and different ways of the director to address the story.

First, in line with her past life as a top model in Goude's rather awkward advertisements, she appears eccentrically dressed singing a high-pitched Chinese song.

The second sequence stands in stark contrast: Casta is now shot in a very different way in a dramatic and oppressing sequence during which she tries to obfuscate a window. Interestingly, the mother of Hsiao Kang was doing the same thing in Tsai's *What Time Is It There?*— thinking that the light may scare the spirit of his defunct husband. There is again a self-quotation but also an evocation of the story of Saint John and Salome: obfuscating the window can refer both to the tenebrous jail of the saint and to the mourning of his death (many modern writers depict a secret passion of Salome for the Saint – who was killed because of Salome mother's order). But, in a metaphoric way, there is also a symbol of Cinema: in a movie theater, lights should be turned off for the movie to start; moreover, the origin of cinema comes from the “camera obscura” used by Renaissance painters and Nineteenth century photographers.

In the third sequence, the setting turned from the snow of the first sequence to tropical forest and Casta becomes an Eve, nude in Paradise. Eve and Salome

have this in common that they represent women as the symbol of flesh and temptation. Tears rolls from Hsiao Kong's face looking at the scene: as if he was becoming Saint John facing a forbidden beauty that cannot be embraced.

In the fourth sequence, the director and his assistant apply ice cubes to the actress's face in order to render the transparent, diaphanous kind of skin they desire to capture: because of their indifference to the cold the actress suffers, there is something cruel and sadistic in this scene.

In the fifth sequence, Salome/Casta and Atun/Saint John, half nude, are playing with matches in the dark: it creates caravaggesque images that remind us that Caravaggio is the classical painters who represents the more Salome (he dedicated three paintings to this topic).

Then the association of Casta to the character of Salome and the play of Oscar Wilde becomes more and more direct. In a tunnel below the Louvre flooded by water, Casta/Salome is seducing Atun/Saint John lying in a round floating piece of wood (like the round wooden cut board used in the beginning, like the circular plate onto which the head of Baptist was presented to Herode). The connection to Oscar Wilde's play appears first not in the script of the dialogue (Casta is singing a Chinese love song) but in the dressings: Casta is wearing a bright red dress evoking Wilde's play in which Saint John (Iokanaan) asks: "*Pourquoi vos vêtements sont-ils teints d'écarlate?*" (Wilde, 1914: 706). Afterwards, while Hsiao Kang is helping Casta/Salome to carry her heavy dress with its interminably long train, Casta/Salomé speaks to him as if he was Saint John the Baptist, declaring her love for him –at this moment the sentence she uttered: "*Si tu m'avais vue, tu m'aurais aimée*" (Wilde, 1914: 716) comes directly from the Wilde's *Salomé*. Here there is a complex and paradoxical interchange between life and drama: 1. the director/Hsiao Kang cannot love her because he desires other men; 2. Hsiao Kang is neither John Baptist nor is he

acting as Saint John Baptist; 3. Even if was Saint John the Baptist he could not love her because he is a saint. But, the fact that Saint John the Baptist turns down Salome's love could be linked not to his sanctity but to his homosexuality. This situation of forbidden or impossible love is a frequent theme in East Asian movies in general (notably in Wong Kar-wai's movies – Heurtebise, 2013) and Taiwanese movies in particular: but in Tsai Ming-liang movies the cause is less social conventions than a kind of pathology of desire that denotes less an abnormality than it constitutes its very structure: "Tsai's Taipei is a world of urban malaise, in which people are cut off from each other and from their feelings, moving around drab, underlit apartments, cheap hotels, and gay saunas, looking for comforts to satisfy their loneliness and isolation." (Wu, 2002). The desire confronts either to the pure passivity of the loved one (*Face*), to its physical absence (*What Time Is It There?*) or its systematical perverted channelization to the wrong object (*The River, The Hole*) (Martin, 2003: 178) ("*The River* suggests a similar resolution, in which the most proper, filial love of child for parent, is conflated with the most 'improper', homosexual love in order to imagine a seemingly impossible that is both scandalous and redemptive.")

At this moment of the film, it becomes clear that if *Face* repeatedly refers to Truffaut, it is also because it is inspired by a famous film of Truffaut: *La nuit américaine*. *La nuit américaine* is a film about the process of filming – exactly as *Face* which is a film about making a film and about the difficulties the director encounters. Moreover, the story of the "fake" movie (*Je vous présente Paméla*) inside the "real" movie (*La nuit américaine*) is the story of a man who falls in love for his daughter in law. Thus the story of *Je vous présente Paméla* (the movie that the crew pretends to shoot in *La nuit américaine*) is very close to the story of *Salomé* since Herode's will to see Salome dancing her lascivious dance is an expression of his desire for Herodias' daughter. Through the story of Wilde's *Salomé*, Tsai "repeats" Truffaut's *La nuit américaine* two times: 1. by

making a film about a film and 2. by making a film about a film narrating the story of an “immoral” love between a man and his step-daughter. In *Face*, there is no interaction between Herode/Leaud and Salome/Casta. However at the end, Herode/Leaud leaves the cast after having said that he cannot love Ardant/Herodias: because Herode desires Salome more than Herodias (and marry to Herodias because of Salome), and also because (in the real life) Fanny Ardant was the wife of Truffaut while Truffaut and Léaud were very close friends.

Finally, in the antepenultimate sequence of the film, the representation of the story of Salome in *Face* becomes direct and explicit. In this sequence, Tsai choses to depict the famous dance of the Seven Veils of Salome in the strange setting of the cold room of a butcher’s shop.

There are different reasons for that. First, the solid icy environment of this antepenultimate sequence is the exact opposite of the flowing water of the beginning of the movie: it symbolizes the trap into which the director has fallen in the process of making this film. Moreover, the fact that the character of Saint John the Baptist is finally endorsed by Lee Kang-sheng and not by Norman Atun could mean that the director has become the victim (it is also another way to impersonate the film). Second, if one reminds that the director previously applied ice cube to the visage of Casta, the fact that Salome is now pouring buckets of smashed ice on Hsiao Kang’s body, while only his face is surfacing can be seen as an act of vengeance for his rejected love. An action that can also be linked to Salome’s mother, i.e. Ardant/Herodiade, carrying of the stuffed stag’s head: “Herodiade needs the animal male principle of Mallarme’s lush summers, the daughter Salome on the animal skins with the stag, in order to freeze herself more firmly into the butcher she becomes in Tsai’s ice room at the end of the film. The virgin will butcher the virile male (gay) stag” (Barton, 2011).

Third, in an apocryphal text, the *Letter of Herode to Pilates*, Salome is

depicted as falling into an icy lake and dying while the ice formed again around her neck as a testimony of God's revenge for the death of Saint John Baptist by decapitation: "Herod to Pontius Pilate the Governor of Jerusalem: Peace. I am in great anxiety. I write these things unto thee, that when thou hast heard them thou mayest be grieved for me. For as my daughter Herodias, who is dear to me, was playing upon a pool of water which had ice upon it, it broke under her, and all her body went down, and her head was cut off and remained on the surface of the ice" (*Lost Books*, 1926: 269-270). This can explain the insistent presence of snow and ice in the whole film. Fourth, there may be a reference to another movie: to G. W. Pabst's *Joyless Street* starring Greta Garbo where two women (a mother and her daughter – again) provide sexual favors to the butcher for meat. In one scene, one could the two women entering the cold room where they will be abused by the butcher.

Fifth, in the background, one can notice the presence of a piece of meat hanged on a hook – which is normal for the cold room of a butcher but in this case there is an obvious reference to Rembrandt's *Slaughtered Ox* (1655) that is exhibited in the Louvre (Van De Wetering, 2011). Rembrandt's *Slaughtered Ox* depicting the fresh carcass of a dead ox hanged on a butcher shop has received many interpretations. One of the most obvious is that the painting is a *memento mori*: a remembering of the fatality of death as our universal common destiny and of the sheer frailty of human life (Müller, 1969: 173). Through references to previous iconographic representations in Dutch paintings, notably Philips Galle's engraving of Maarten van Heemskerck's *The slaughter of the fattened calf* (1562) and Martin van Cleve's *The slaughtered ox* (1566). Kenneth M. Craig links the painting to the parable of the prodigal son and to the sacrifice of Christ (Craig, 1983): "The killing of the fatted calf at the joyous return of the Son is the symbolic equivalent of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Sermon after sermon as well as innumerable commentaries on Luke 15 make this point: the ox stands

for Christ.” But Rembrandt’s *Slaughtered Ox* is also a seminal painting for modernist painters and, more especially, symbolist ones: there-enacting of Rembrandt’s painting by Delacroix, Daumier and Soutine (Posèq, 1991) creates a link between the *Slaughtered Ox* and Wilde’s *Salome*: thus the quotation of Rembrandt’s *Slaughtered Ox* is also a way for Tsai Ming-liang to connect this European and French modernist tradition. In this specific sense, both Rembrandt’s *Slaughtered Ox* and Tsai Ming-liang’s *Face* last sequence are powerful examples of the capacity of Art to extract beauty from what is considered as vile and repugnant (Rembrandt being one of the “beacons” of Baudelaire – Baudelaire, 1982: 193). As well as, by this painting, Rembrandt confronted to the pictorial canon of his time, Tsai Ming-liang confronts with his films to the conventional expectations of the cinematographic audience of his own time. By this movie, Tsai Ming-liang affirms both his singularity as an artist in the cinematographic industry and the value of Cinema as an authentic art form. Moreover, by associating a figural element of a well-known painting (located in the Louvres), what Tsai Ming-liang proposes is a new way, at the same time literal and symbolic, to configure the articulation between cinema and museum.

*Face* it is not only a movie about the film-making process but a movie engaged in a dialectic relations with other forms of art. It is not simply a movie about a museum (the Louvre) but a movie about the ambiguous, complex and somewhat conflictual relation between Cinema as an authentic Art form and Museum as an institution collecting and preserving important artworks.

The relationships between Art and Museum have been intensively discussed in recent years (Rosen, 2001; Wasson, 2005; DalleVacche, 2012). It is not in the frame of this paper to provide a review of this literature but simply to introduce the problem of the relationships between Art and Museum and its relevance for the analysis of Tsai Ming-liang’s *Face*. At first glance, Cinema and Museum

seem to belong to two different ontological worlds: Museum denotes a world of Immobility, Contemplation, and Academic Criticism while Cinema denotes a world of Movement, Consumption, and Popular Amusement.

But such categorization is globally misleading, as A. DalleVacche (2012) demonstrated: “There are major differences between the cinema and the museum: the former is about voyeurism, while the latter depends on exhibition. Yet this contrast does not prevent a beneficial exchange between two new partners. By siding with the art museum, mainstream cinema gains status and legitimacy, and by siding with fictional cinema, the museum becomes intriguing thanks to the unique vision of a strong director. Whereas the museum requires an ambulatory situation and encourages a mixture of distraction and concentration, the cinema still means sitting down in the darkness and paying attention to only one big luminous screen, with no educational labels on the side. [...] Ironically, the medium of the ephemeral and the fugitive moment, the cinema, has now become convenient for the museum in order to retrain its public to a certain degree of steady attention and respectful expectation. On one hand, the museum is keen on new media as a tool to penetrate into the deepest recesses of the public sphere; on the other, it also seems that the museum has been turning to talented directors [...] in order to explore death and memory, the storytelling power of objects, and the shaping force of human creativity.” Inflicted with mass tourism, world museums are no more the ideal location for the pure contemplation of art-forms while after home cinema, internet streaming, and the rise of in the quality of television drama series, to watch an independent movie in a film-theater can be a moment of individual and lonely confrontation with an authentic artwork.

More deeply, the encounter between Museum and Cinema is related to their parallel evolution: Museum and Cinema could meet when Cinema started to capture not only Movement but also Time (Deleuze, 2000: xi) (when stillness

and long shots are privileged over action and quick shots) while Museum started to be not a mere place of conservation and preservation of artworks but also the site of cinematically edited, choreographically organized and scenographically dramatized exhibition (Robert Wilson's exhibitions, such as *Room for Salomé* at the Stedelijk Museum, being the best examples): "In the context of world fairs, thematic exhibitions saw the first attempts to intoxicate space by the use of a mix of time-based media [...] Making exhibitions no longer consisted merely of assembling, searching and presenting historically striking, aesthetically accepted and hopefully interesting artefacts [...] Attempts to imagine a new space-time continuum through innovations in media technology, the rediscovery of intermedia crossover in the more respectable guise of transdisciplinarity and, not least, the dangers of a 'society of the spectacle' as attested by the Situationists, constitute the system of coordinates underlying the notion of a new scenography, which was being tried out for real in various exhibition and museum projects [...]" (den Oudsten, 2011: xii-xv).

As Brigitte Peucker said: "Movement enters the museum and stillness invades the moving image" (Peucker, 2012). It is not surprising that one of the longest continuous shot of the history of cinema occurred in a film dedicated to a museum: the single 96-minute Steadicam sequence shot of Sokurov's *Russian Ark* (2002) dedicated to Saint Petersburg Hermitage Museum. It is also logical that the directors working at/with/for museums, such as Peter Greenaway, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, or Tsai Ming-liang (among others) are not operating in mainstream film-industry and propose to the viewers a rather contemplative and innovative film experience.

It is in this global context that we can understand Tsai Ming-liang's *Face* relations to the Louvre. First, as we noticed in the beginning of this article, it will be rather difficult for the spectator ignoring it to guess that this film has any

direct relation to the Louvre and has been commissioned by the Museum since, until the very end, it never appears as such: neither the outside architecture (the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century buildings or the 20<sup>th</sup> century pyramid) nor its world famous sculptures and paintings (*Mona Lisa*, *Venus de Milo*, *Nike of Samothrace*, etc.) are displayed on the screen. This is symptomatic of Tsai Ming-liang's difficulty to act as a pure mediator of inanimate masterpieces – everything in Tsai's cinema and discourses contradict with the objective of providing a promotional film for a Museum. What is seen of the Louvre Museum in *Face* in the film, before its penultimate sequence, is everything that makes it non-identifiable, non-recognizable: its undergrounds corridors, its subterranean waters, its outside gardens, and unglamorous storerooms.

It is only in the penultimate sequence of the movie, when Antoine/Léaud/Herode comes out, smuggling out his way like a thief, from a wall in the most famous gallery of the Louvre, that the Museum is represented by its most famous Italian paintings. Immediately above him, hangs the famous *Saint John the Baptist* by Da Vinci. On his left Da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks* depicting also Saint John as a child and at his right *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne*. Interestingly this connection to Da Vinci's *Saint John the Baptist* is made through Antoine/Léaud/Herode. It should be remembered that in Wilde's drama, Herode did not want the death of Saint John and refused to assume it; the apparition of Antoine/Léaud/Herode below the image of Saint John could be interpreted as an expression of his inner remorse. Furthermore, perhaps only Léaud as the spiritual heir of Truffaut's films could face Western art masterpieces. If we remind that Saint John the Baptist is the forerunner of Jesus Christ, one can suppose that Tsai wants to tell us something about artistic filiation: filiation between Jean-Pierre Léaud and Lee Kang-sheng as well as between François Truffaut and himself. Such a sense of artistic continuity in the realm of films demonstrates the historicity of Cinema and thus its connection to museography.

But the difference between Cinema, as the totality of the (good) films ever directed, and Museum, as the best collection of art-(master)pieces, is that what Museums (as classical as Louvre) can exhibit are only the final results of an artistic process while Cinema has the capacity to capture his own making process. By making a movie about the film-making process in the setting of the Louvre who takes the form of a tribute to Truffaut, Tsai Ming-liang (as an independent author) gives the best homage to Cinema. It could be also in this sense that we can understand the title of the movie: in a place of objects whose monetary value exceeds the price insurance companies will give for a human life (i.e. famous masterpieces in museums), *Face* is a reminder of the priceless value of the human individual behind all forms of art. It is the artist presence that gives value to art-forms and the capacity to feel this presence in artworks that makes the artist.

In this sense, the way Tsai avoids to present directly the famous artworks of the Louvre is the best manifestation of its paradoxical way to take place into it. First, when speaking about *Face*, Tsai Ming-liang describes it as a self-portrait – thus turning the initial and official goal of presenting the artworks of others into a personal motivation for presenting himself as an artist: “I processed it [*Face*] with exactly the conception of self-portrait. Of course, it is full of my reflections on life and on creation; the movie is indeed about the relation between life and creation” (Tsai, 2011). Second, in a world where cinema is an industry and movie theaters obey to imperatives of mass-consumption profitability, Tsai’s non-commercial films have found their most propitiate host in museums – as Tsai himself said: “gradually my movies find a home, and that is the museum” (Bunchan, 2010). In the setting of a Museum, features films cannot be exhibited: only *fragments* of films can be part of a museum installation – and Tsai himself recently organized such an exhibition (2014) with the excerpts of his last film *Stray Dog*. But, at the same time, the Museum is the ideal place to watch and

appreciate short-films – especially the short films produced with an artistic intention: the recent exhibition *No Sleep* (2016) in MoNTUE being the best illustration of this. Conversely, by providing hospitality to films that are outed from movie theaters by commercial productions, the Museum can find an opportunity to renew itself, to engage with contemporary forms of art, to become a center not only for the conservation of past artworks but also for the propagation of new (aesthetic) forms of life.

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